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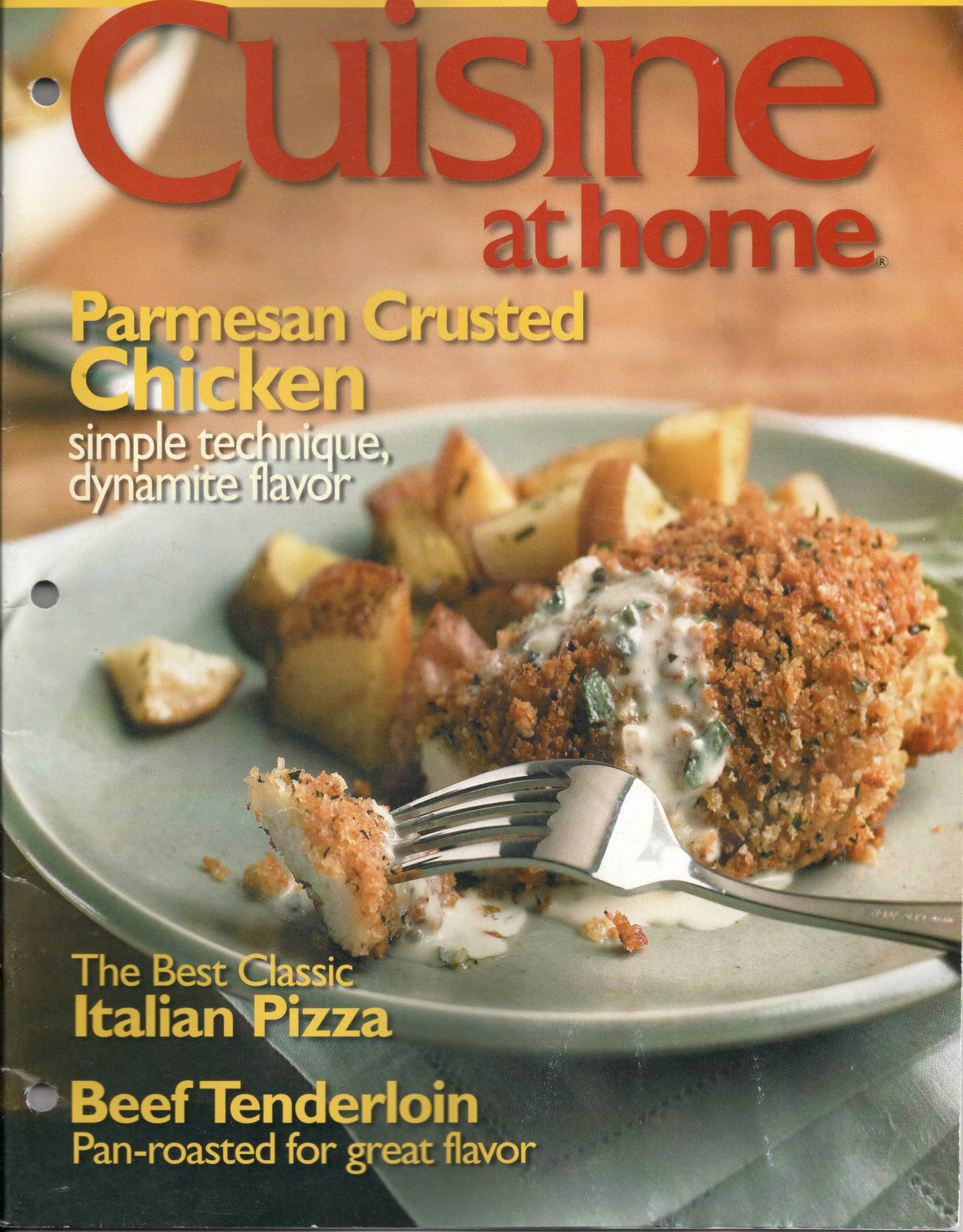

Parmesan Crusted Chicken

simple technique, dynamite flavor

The Best Classic
Italian Pizza

Beef Tenderloin
Pan-roasted for great flavor

Cuisine at home

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editor's letter

Most of our kitchens tend to have a split personality. During the week, the kitchen serves as a survival "pit stop" of sorts—fueling the family machine for a fast-paced week. It's also a social intersection of lives where family members cross paths to eat and chat briefly on their way to meetings, work, or school.

But it's a little different on the weekend. The kitchen takes on a relaxed mood and opens itself up to friendly gatherings and casual conversations. There always seem to be people in the kitchen when you cook on the weekend. And that's why this issue is jammed-packed with so many great recipes that appeal to all tastes—even your pickiest eater. Who doesn't like good pizza?

Pamela Sheldon Johns, our guest editor, joins us in the kitchen to bake the perfect pizza. Most of you know that wine and olive oil are tightly regulated by governments in many European countries. Well, guess what? In Italy, so is pizza. The Italian government has imposed strict guidelines regulating the way real Italian pizza should be made. Pamela shares her knowledge and skills of this process so you can make authentic pizza too. But don't worry about not having all the right equipment or ingredients. She makes allowances for most of these shortcomings and still puts out a pizza that most Italians would be proud to serve.

In the mood for chicken? You have to try the crusted chicken recipes beginning on Page 6. Take your pick of either Parmesan cheese or chopped pecans to make the absolutely best chicken you've ever put in your mouth. Add the sage butter sauce and roasted garlic and rosemary potatoes for the perfect meal. Good enough for a dinner party, yet easy enough for Wednesday night.

No matter what great recipes you make in this issue, you have to finish with the lemon tart. So refreshing and clean tasting—it's like taking a big bite of spring. What really puts things over the top are the tartlets with macaroon crust. Senior Editor, Sue Hoss, knows her desserts. Even the experiments gone awry were worth every calorie!

Enjoy this special issue. I'm sure you'll find all the information in *Cuisine at home* just as good as every bite of the lemon tart!

John

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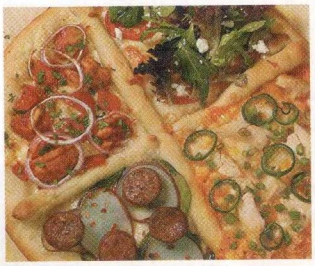

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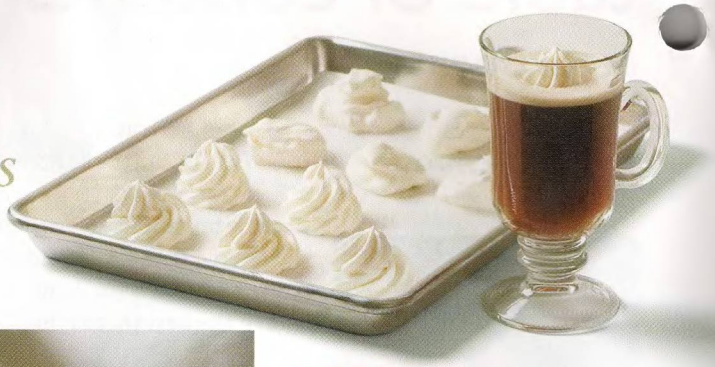
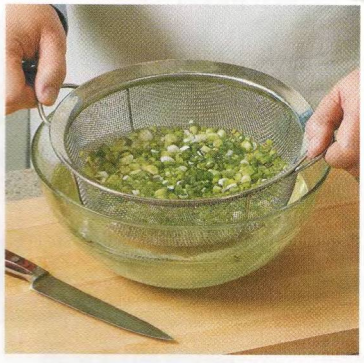


Tip from the Test Kitchen
A drop of yolk in egg whites will ruin meringues. To prevent this, separate each egg into a small bowl, then transfer the white to a mixing bowl. Repeat for each egg needed.

Milder Onions

To reduce the strong flavor of onion in salsas and other uncooked foods, chop the onion and rinse it in cold water three times. Let sit in the final rinse water for 30 minutes, then drain and dry. This retains the crispness but eliminates the burn.

Steven Sano
Berkeley, CA



Perfect Cuts

Use an electric knife to slice through cinnamon roll dough rather than a serrated knife or dental floss. The electric knife doesn't smash or tear the dough like the other methods.

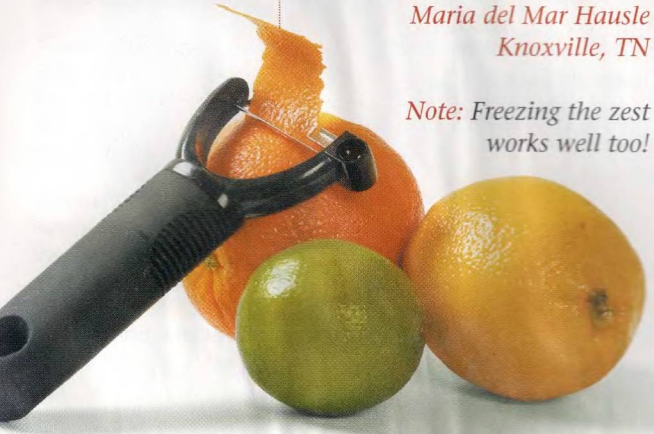
Donald Lowe
Laguna Niguel, CA

Zest At Hand

I always peel the rind off citrus before juicing or using the fruit, and store the rind in a resealable plastic bag in the refrigerator. That way, I have zest on hand even if I don't have the fruit.

Maria del Mar Hausle
Knoxville, TN

Note: Freezing the zest works well too!



Hollowing Tomatoes

I have a great way to hollow out cherry tomatoes: Use a small (1/4 tsp.) metal measuring spoon. First remove the stem, then cut into the tomato with the edge of the spoon. Scoop out the seeds with the bowl of the spoon.

Kathy Roberts
Elmhurst, IL

Coffee Treats

When you have leftover whipped cream, place it in a pastry bag fitted with a star tip, pipe it onto a parchment-lined baking sheet, and freeze. Don't feel like piping? Just drop dollops from a spoon and freeze. When frozen, transfer them into a freezer bag. They are great on top of hot chocolate or coffee.

Sarah Hunt
Portland, OR

Grate Butter

When making scones, I grate the butter on the large-hole side of a cheese grater instead of cutting it in with a knife. This makes the whole process easier and less messy. I found that my scones come out better too! Hold the butter by the wrapper to prevent it from melting from the warmth of your hands.

Glen Aby
Santa Clara, CA

Sticky Situation

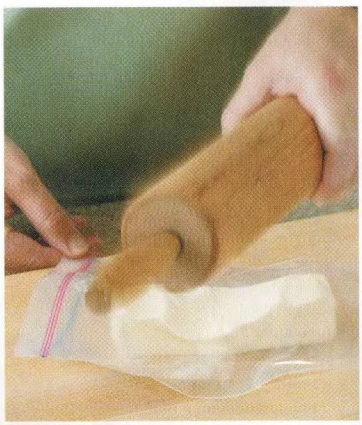
Bottles with "sticky" contents (corn syrup, honey, maple syrup, etc.) can be a hassle to keep reopening. So before using the bottle for the first time, wipe the threads with a light coating of oil. The lid will never stick and won't be difficult to open!

Mary Arris
Virginia Beach, VA

Instant Soft Butter

I bake cookies all the time, but usually forget to take the butter out of the fridge to soften. I've used a microwave, but if I turn my back—instant butter puddle! To soften butter quickly, unwrap a stick of butter, place it in a resealable plastic bag, and use a rolling pin to beat and flatten the butter out.

Ching-Yee Hu
Mountain View, CA



Freezing Tortillas

Before freezing extra tortillas, place waxed paper between each one. This allows you to easily and quickly remove as many as needed without damaging the tortillas or having to thaw the entire package.

Carolyn Stratton
Grand Junction, CO

Roll Out The Salad...

Salad dressing is not much good when tossed with a bowl full of wet greens. Here's my solution: I wash the greens, separate them into leaves, lay them on a large, clean kitchen towel, and roll them up like a jelly roll. Stored in the refrigerator, the towel will absorb the water and then slowly feed it back to the leaves, keeping them fresh for a week. The result is crisp, clean, dry salad greens that won't get rust spots and or dilute the salad dressing.

Lillian Kayte
Gainesville, FL

Easy Chile Seeding

To seed jalapeños (without gloves!), cut off both ends of the chile. Stand it on a cutting board and slice down its sides, removing the flesh around the core. Discard the core with the seeds.

Ann Marie Mattioli
New York, NY

Chocolate Grating

Whenever you need just a bit of chocolate for sauces, ganache, or a quick topping, try using a grater (large holes work best). Hold the chocolate by the wrapper to keep it from melting. To store, seal the grated chocolate in a plastic bag and keep in a cool, dark place—not the fridge or freezer.

Mark Montgomery
Wheeling, WV

Measuring Honey

Honey can be tough to remove from measuring cups and spoons. One technique is to oil the utensil before measuring—the honey will slide out cleanly. Another trick is to use heat. Simply dip the measuring spoon in hot water. Honey will not stick to a heated spoon.

share your tips and techniques with *Cuisine at home*

If you have a unique way of solving a cooking problem, we'd like to hear from you, and we'll consider publishing your tip in one or more of our works. Just write down your cooking tip and mail it to *Cuisine at home*, Tips Editor, 2200 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50312, or contact us through our email address shown below. Please include your name, address, and daytime phone number in case we have questions. We'll pay you $25 if we publish your tip.

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Crusting chicken

Finally! A crusted chicken breast that's crisp on the outside, juicy on the inside. Read on for the secrets.

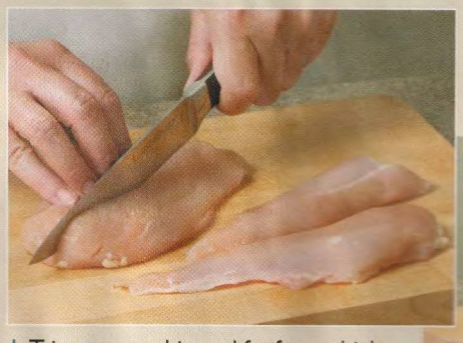
I'm picky about crusted chicken. Way too much of it has been dredged in powdered, pulverized bread crumbs and dull, dried herbs. As if that weren't enough, it's often baked—to death.

So developing a recipe for chicken with a flavorful crust and juicy interior was just the kind of challenge I like. The keys are in the four "Cs": the chicken, crumbs, coating, and cooking.

The chicken

Boneless, skinless breast halves are the way to go—they're convenient and cook quickly. Whole breast halves are too big, so first, halve each one lengthwise, *see Figure 1*. Doing this ensures that the coating doesn't burn before the chicken is cooked through. If you double this recipe, just be sure to saute the chicken in two pans to avoid crowding.

Now, lightly pound the pieces to an even 1/2" thick, *see Figure 2*. You aren't tenderizing or creating a cutlet for scaloppine here, so be gentle. Pounding them in a slightly damp plastic bag helps prevent sticking and tearing.



1 Trim excess skin and fat from chicken. Slice each breast half lengthwise down the center.

2 Lightly pound each piece (in a plastic bag with a little water inside) to an even thickness.

Crusted Chicken Breasts

Makes Four 2–3 oz. Pieces
Total Time: About 1 Hour

Prepare:
2 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (6–8 oz. each)

For the Dipping Mixture—
Blend:
2 egg whites
2 t. cornstarch
Juice of 1/2 lemon

For the Crusting Mixture—
Combine:
1 cup coarse dry bread crumbs, *see right*
1 T. chopped fresh parsley
1 t. kosher salt
1/4 t. ground black pepper
Zest of one lemon, minced

Saute Chicken in:
3 T. olive oil

Preheat oven to 450°.
Prepare chicken breasts, cutting and pounding, *Fig. 1 and 2*.
Blend egg whites, cornstarch, and lemon juice with a fork in a wide, shallow dish; set aside.
Combine bread crumbs, parsley, salt, pepper, and zest in a second wide, shallow dish. Crust chicken breasts, *Fig. 3 and 4*. Let chicken rest at room temperature on a rack for 20–30 min. to set crust.
Saute chicken in oil in a large, nonstick, ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat for about 3 minutes, or until golden brown and crisp, *Fig. 5*. Carefully turn with a spatula, *Fig. 6*, and transfer the skillet to the oven to finish cooking. Roast chicken just until done, about 8 more minutes, *Fig. 7*.

The crumbs

Crumbs are the most important "C" in this equation. Besides adding great flavor, they're essential for the right texture. They create a crouton-like crust on the chicken, not a dry, crumbly one.

For the best crumbs, you need the right bread. A rustic-type loaf with a chewy, yet fairly soft crust (like *ciabatta*) is ideal. Bread with a holey interior makes crumbs that vary in size—that's good. Stay away from loaves having dense, hard crusts. These crumbs would make chewing painful!

Cut bread into cubes (leave crust on) and process to crumbs. Work in batches and don't overfill the bowl. The crumbs will be different sizes—from powdery to the size of peas. That's fine. Uniformity is not the goal here.

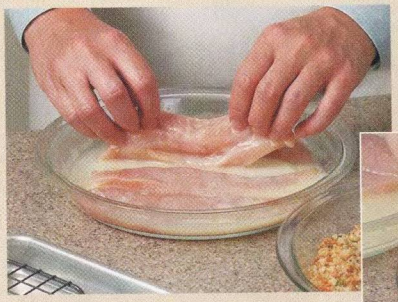
Dry the crumbs on a baking sheet for 10–15 minutes in a 200° oven until they're completely dried but not toasted. Freeze any extra crumbs in a resealable bag.

Coating and cooking

To coat, you need to dip the chicken into something wet (egg whites), then roll it in something dry (crumbs). Even if the meat feels moist, it's not enough for crumbs to stick and stay stuck. Egg whites are the natural "glue."

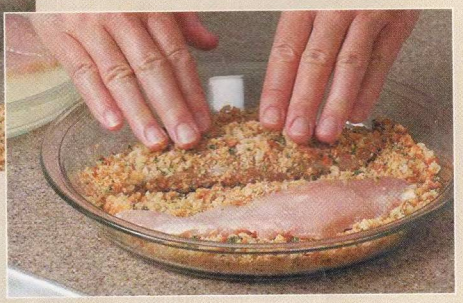
Dip the chicken in the egg, then the crumb mixtures, *see Figures 3 & 4*. Because the crumbs are fairly coarse, they won't adhere well—don't worry. Scoop handfuls of crumbs, piling them on each piece, then transfer the chicken to a rack set over a baking sheet. Air-dry chicken 20–30 minutes to help set the crumbs.

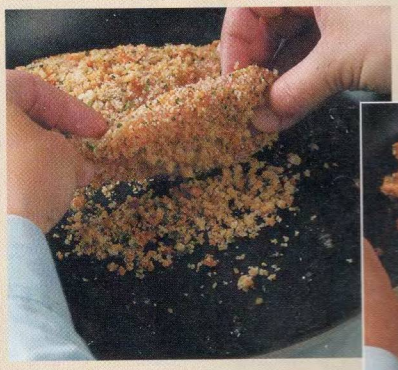
To cook, first saute the chicken on the stove in an ovenproof, nonstick skillet. As you put the chicken in the pan, lay it *toward* you, *see Figure 5*. This way, it rests on top of any crumbs that fall off. Saute until the chicken is golden and crisp on one side, then carefully flip the pieces over (use your hand to help gently guide them), *see Figure 6*. Finally, transfer the whole pan to a 450° oven to finish, *see Figure 7*. Eight to 10 more minutes is all it takes.



3 Dip both sides of prepared chicken into egg white-cornstarch mixture. Transfer the chicken to the crumb dish.

4 Pat crumbs on both sides of chicken—it's okay if some crumbs fall off. Air-dry on rack 20–30 minutes.





5 Heat oil in large nonstick pan. Lay chicken *toward* you in the pan—the loose crumbs will form a "bed" for chicken to lay on.

6 Saute chicken until golden, 3 minutes. Carefully flip chicken, then transfer pan to oven.

7 Roast chicken in the pan in the oven 8–10 minutes, or until cooked through.

Parmesan crusted chicken

with sage-butter sauce

Don't think crusted chicken is "upscale" enough for company? Well, it is when it's with a rich butter sauce and crispy roasted potatoes.

It's true, the crusted chicken on Pages 6 and 7 is *really* good. But for something a tad more fancy (without a whole lot more work), try this—Parmesan crusted chicken with sage sauce and roasted potatoes. You'd pay money for this meal in a restaurant (but it wouldn't be as good).

Making a full dinner like this isn't as hard as you think. The chicken is prepared just like it is on Page 7 except that Parmesan is added to the crumb recipe. Follow the crusting steps for the chicken on Page 7, then prepare the potatoes and start roasting them while the chicken air-dries (but before it's sauteed).

After that, make the sage sauce and keep it warm in a water bath—it will hold just fine like that for at least an hour. Then, once the potatoes have roasted for 15 minutes, saute and roast the chicken.

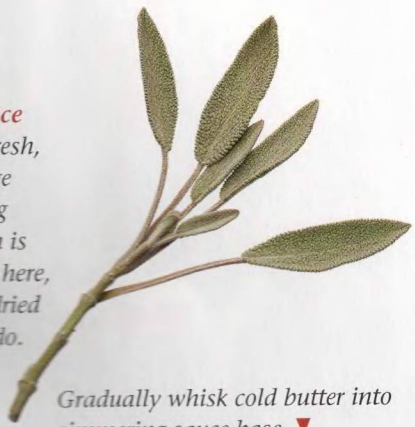
Parmesan Crusted Chicken

Makes 4 Servings; Total Time: About 1 Hour

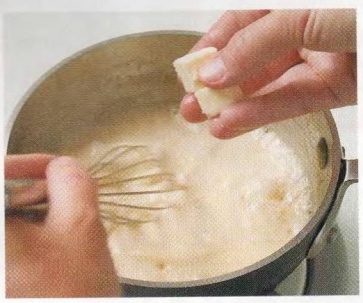
Prepare:
2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts halves, *Page 6*
Whisk:
Dipping Mixture, *Page 6*
Add to Crusting Mixture, Page 6:
1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
Serve Chicken with:
Sage-Butter Sauce
Roasted Potatoes with Garlic and Rosemary

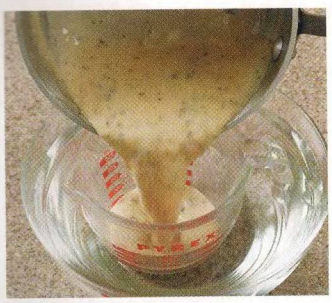
Preheat oven to 450°.
Prepare chicken breasts by halving and pounding.
Whisk egg whites, cornstarch, and lemon juice in shallow dish for Dipping Mixture.
Add Parmesan to the Crusting Mixture. Crust prepared chicken, let rest, saute, and roast, *Page 7*.
Serve chicken with Sage-Butter Sauce and Roasted Potatoes with Garlic and Rosemary.

Sage advice
Dried or fresh, a little sage goes a long way. Fresh is preferable here, but 1/2 t. dried sage will do.



Gradually whisk cold butter into simmering sauce base. ▼





◀*Keep sauce warm in a cup set inside a bowl of hot (not boiling) water. Stir sauce often.*

Sage-Butter Sauce

Makes About 1 Cup
Total Time: 20 Minutes

Saute in 1 T. Unsalted Butter:
3 T. shallot, minced
Add and Reduce:
1/2 cup dry white wine
1/2 cup heavy cream
1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
1 t. fresh lemon juice
Whisk in:
4 T. (1/2 stick) cold unsalted butter, cubed
Finish with:
1–2 t. minced fresh sage
Salt, white pepper, and cayenne to taste

Saute shallot in butter in a small saucepan over medium heat just until soft, 2–3 minutes.
Add wine, cream, broth, and lemon juice. Simmer until reduced by half, 8–10 minutes.
Whisk in butter, 1 T. at a time, stirring constantly. Do not add more butter until previous addition has melted completely.
Finish sauce with sage and seasonings. Keep warm in a water bath until ready to serve.

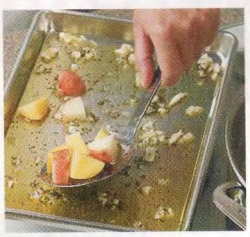
make it a menu

Roasted Potatoes with Garlic and Rosemary

Makes About 3 Cups
Total Time: 30–45 Minutes

Heat:
1/4 cup olive oil
4–5 cloves garlic, smashed
1 T. chopped fresh rosemary
Boil:
2 lb. Yukon gold and/or red skinned potatoes, unpeeled, cut into large chunks
Roast; Season with:
Coarse sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 450° with rack in lower third. Bring 6 quarts salted water to a boil in a large saucepan.
Heat oil, garlic, and rosemary on a large baking sheet (with sides) on stovetop over medium-low heat. Do not allow garlic to brown.



◀*To heat oil, place the pan directly on the stovetop.*

Boil potatoes in water for one minute. Transfer to the baking sheet on the stove with a slotted spoon; stir to coat with oil.
Roast potatoes in oven on lower rack for 20 minutes. Carefully toss them with a spatula, then roast another 10 minutes, or until cooked through, browned, and crisp. Season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.

pecan crusted chicken salad

with honey-mustard dressing

Salads like this one don't come along very often. Its full flavor and crunchy texture are sure to satisfy.

My big complaint about a lot of salads is their narrow-mindedness. Lettuce, cucumbers, and tomatoes are the accepted norm. But there's plenty more out there to build a better salad.

Like chicken. You're already familiar with crusted chicken. The pecans and spices in this crumb mixture add more flavor.

Add onion and goat cheese for a pungent bite. Bitter greens, like arugula and radicchio, offset the sweet-tart dressing, but some romaine leaves tossed in there helps balance out the equation.

But you know the best part? The crumbs left in the saute pan! Sprinkle them on top of the salads. *Voilà*—instant croutons!

Pecan Crusted Chicken

Makes 4 Servings; Total Time: About 1 Hour

Prepare:
2 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, *Page 6*

Whisk:
Dipping Mixture, *Page 6*

Add to Crusting Mixture, Page 6:
¾ cup finely chopped pecans
½ t. dried oregano
½ t. dried thyme
½ t. paprika
¼ t. cayenne

Slice Chicken; Serve with:
Salad Greens with Honey Mustard Dressing

Preheat oven to 450°.
Prepare chicken breasts by halving and pounding.
Whisk egg whites, cornstarch, and lemon juice in shallow dish for Dipping Mixture.
Add pecans, herbs, and spices to the Crusting Mixture. Crust prepared chicken, let rest, saute, and roast, *Page 7*.
Slice chicken and serve fanned over salad greens tossed with Honey-Mustard Dressing.

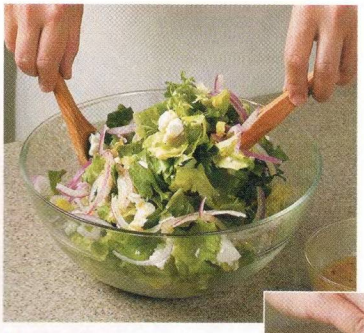
Salad Greens with Honey-Mustard Dressing

For the Dressing, Combine:
¼ cup honey
3 T. Dijon mustard
3 T. extra-virgin olive oil
1 T. shallot, minced
1 T. apple cider vinegar
Juice of ½ lemon
Salt and pepper to taste

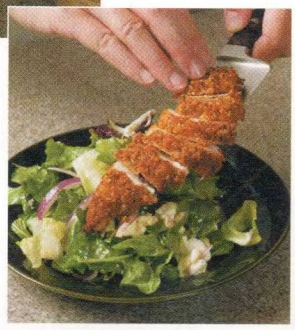
Toss Dressing with:
8 cups mixed greens such as arugula, radicchio, curly endive, romaine, and leaf lettuces
½ cup red onion, thinly sliced
4 oz. mild goat cheese, crumbled

Top with:
Sliced Pecan Crusted Chicken
Toasted crumbs from pan

For the dressing, combine all ingredients until blended.
Toss dressing with greens, onion, and goat cheese (you won't need all the dressing). Arrange greens on four plates.
Top greens with sliced chicken. Sprinkle any toasted crumbs left in the pan on the salads. Serve with extra dressing on the side.



▲ *Toss greens, onion, and goat cheese with some of the Honey-Mustard Dressing.*



Slice crusted chicken on bias and fan out on beds of greens. ►

▲ *Sprinkle some of the toasted crumbs from the saute pan on top of each salad.*

option

Baked Sweet Potatoes with Maple-Jalapeño Sour Cream

These potatoes are a nice change from gooey Thanksgiving-like sweet potato preparations.

Makes 4 Potatoes
Total Time: 40–45 Minutes

For the Sweet Potatoes—
Rub with Oil and Salt:
4 sweet potatoes, scrubbed, dried

For the Topping—
Combine:
½ cup sour cream or plain yogurt
1 T. pure maple syrup
2 t. jalapeño, seeded, minced
1 t. fresh lime juice
Salt and Tabasco to taste

Serve Potatoes with:
Maple-Jalapeño Sour Cream
Bacon bits
Sliced scallions

Preheat oven to 450° with rack positioned in the center.
Rub scrubbed, dried sweet potatoes with oil and salt. Bake directly on rack for 40–45 minutes, or until soft when pierced.
Combine all topping ingredients; chill until ready to serve.
Serve potatoes with Maple-Jalapeño Sour Cream, bacon bits, and scallions.

making great meatballs

Juicy, aromatic, and packed with flavor, these homemade Italian meatballs have a lot more talent than just being able to sit on top of pasta.

With schedules the way they are, it's good to run across a dish that can serve several menus. These meatballs do just that.

Saucy Meatballs with Pasta: As common as this might seem, this dish has plenty of fans. Of course the meatballs are sensational tasting, but what's fun is making them any size you want. Two giant meatballs sitting on a mound of pasta looks pretty cool.

Italian Wedding Soup: A quick soup that makes a perfect main course. Although you use canned chicken broth, the fresh vegetables combine with the beans and tiny meatballs to make an unusually rich stock.

Meatball Sub: Check out the Back Cover for a hero of a lunch. Crusty hoagies filled with spicy meatballs and oozing cheese will warm any winter day.

No mess meatballs

Some recipes fry meatballs for extra flavor and firm texture. In my opinion, this isn't necessary. You can retain *plenty* of flavor and texture by baking them at a high temperature. The best part—there's no mess!

Mixing: Mixing meatballs is a two step process. Before adding the meat, blend other ingredients thoroughly then add the meat and mix with a fork, *see Figure 1*. Using a fork prevents overmixing and compacting which can toughen meatballs.

Shaping: The best way to shape meatballs is to use a disher, *below*. Scoop out the meat mixture (with the disher) onto a baking sheet, and then roll the scoops into balls, *see Figure 2*. To prevent sticking, dip your hands in water.

Cooking: Once all the meatballs are rolled and placed on the baking sheet, pour beef broth to cover the bottom of the pan, *see Figure 3*. This keeps the meatballs juicy. Be sure to save the drippings after baking—you'll want to put this into your tomato sauce for knockout flavor.

Basic Meatballs

You can cook these meatballs ahead and then freeze by placing them on a baking sheet. When hard, remove and store in a freezer bag.

Makes 30–33 (1 1/2 oz.) Meatballs; Total Time: 50 Minutes

Stir Together:

- 1 cup unseasoned bread crumbs
- 3/4 cup Romano or Parmesan cheese, finely grated
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1/2 cup low-sodium beef broth
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 2 T. dried oregano
- 1 T. garlic, minced
- 1 T. kosher salt
- 1 T. ground black pepper
- 2 t. dried basil
- 1 t. crushed red pepper flakes
- Pinch nutmeg

Add; Shape:

- 2 lb. ground chuck

Cover Bottom of Pan with:

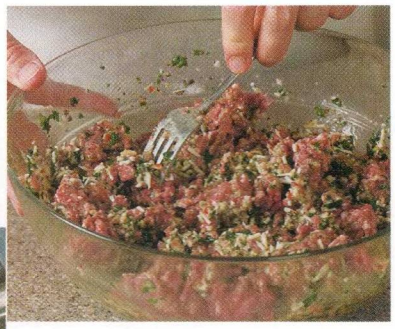
- 1 cup low-sodium beef broth

Preheat oven to 450°.

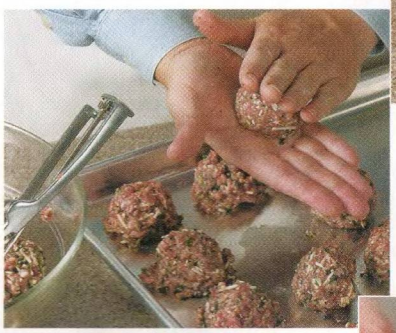
Stir together all ingredients (except the ground meat) in a large mixing bowl.

Add the ground chuck and mix together thoroughly. Using a portioning scoop or 2 spoons, shape the meat mixture into balls (about 2" in diameter or 1 1/2 oz. each). Coat a baking sheet or shallow roasting pan with nonstick cooking spray. Space the meatballs on the pan so they're not touching or crowded together.

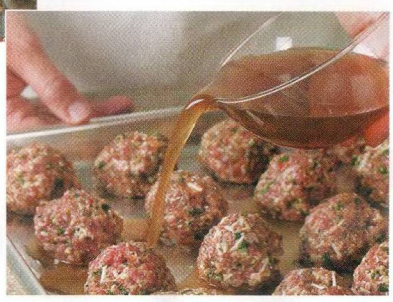
Cover bottom of pan with beef broth. Bake for 25 minutes, or until the meatballs are just cooked through. Reserve pan juices for sauce.



1 Combine the ground chuck with the bread crumb mixture. Stir thoroughly with a fork.



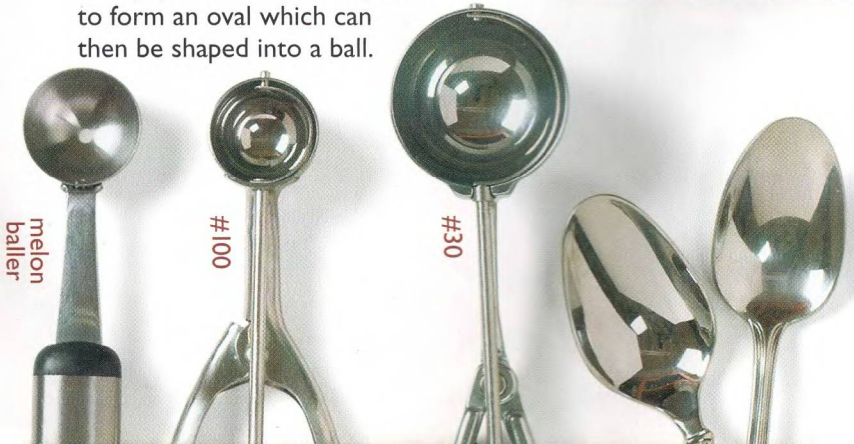
2 Scoop out meat to form golf ball-sized portions. Roll and place on pan so they're not touching.



3 Cover the bottom of the pan with beef broth. Bake about 25 minutes.

Easier Ways to Scoop

You might want to consider utilizing one of the tools below for making meatballs a consistent size. The first is simply a large melon baller—it works just fine, but meat tends to stick in its bowl. The next two scoops are different sized "portioning scoops," or dishers. These work best as they have retracting blades that release the meat or other foods (like cookie dough). Finally, you can use two spoons to form an oval which can then be shaped into a ball.



saucy meatballs *with pasta*

Meatballs in Fresh Tomato Sauce

Serves 4–6; Total Time: 40 Minutes

Saute in 1/4 Cup Olive Oil:
1 1/2 cups yellow onion, diced
Stir in:
2 t. garlic, minced
Add and Simmer:
3 cans (14 1/2 oz. each) whole plum tomatoes, crushed
1/2 cup reserved meatball pan drippings, *Page 13*
1/2 cup minced fresh parsley
1 T. sugar
1 t. crushed red pepper flakes
Salt to taste
Add and Simmer:
12 cooked meatballs
Stir in:
1 lb. cooked pasta
Before Serving, Add:
1/4 cup fresh basil, cut in strips
Garnish with:
Parmesan cheese, grated

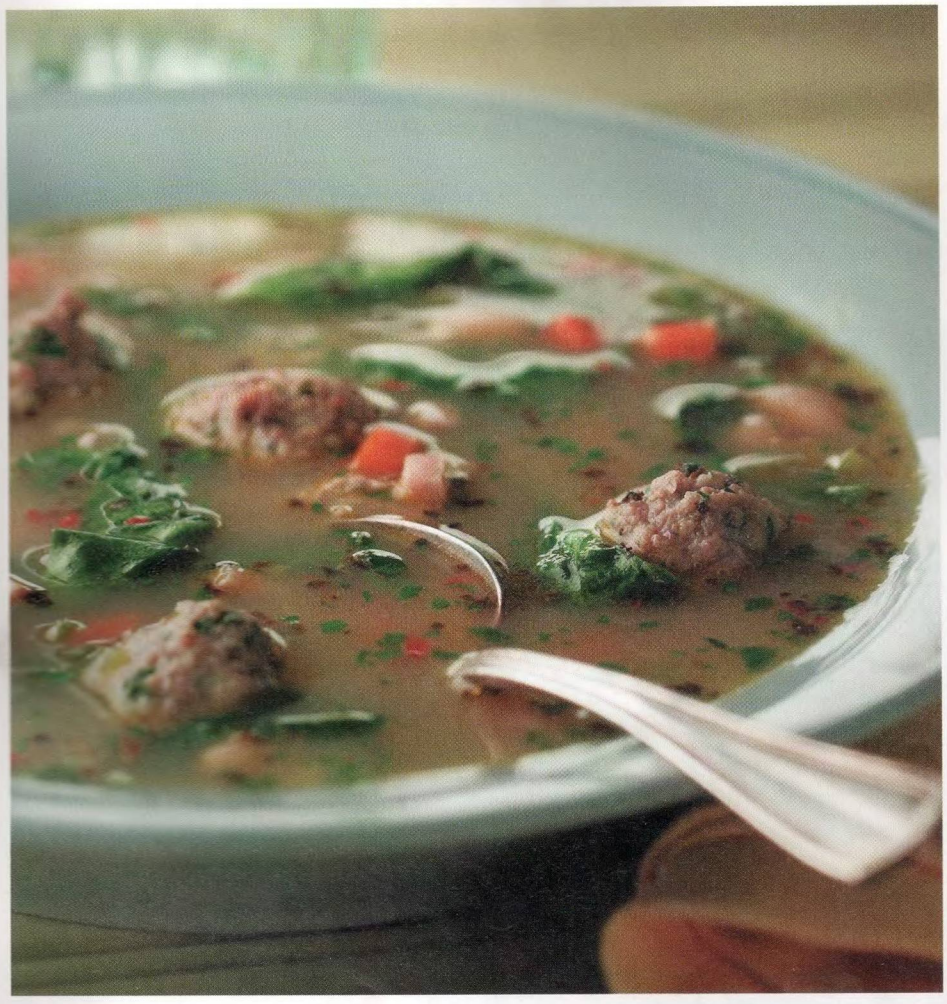
Saute onions in oil over med.-high heat in a large pan until translucent, about 4 min.
Stir in garlic. Cook just until you smell it, about 30 seconds.
Add tomatoes, pan drippings, parsley, sugar, pepper flakes, and salt. Simmer 15 minutes. Start boiling the water for pasta.
Add cooked meatballs to the sauce and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes to heat through. Meanwhile, cook pasta according to package directions; drain.
Stir in the cooked pasta and toss well to coat.
Before serving, add the fresh basil strips.
Garnish pasta and meatballs with grated Parmesan cheese.

▲ *The pan drippings from the meatballs add extra flavor to the sauce.*

▼ *Add the cooked meatballs to the sauce to heat through.*

▲ *Stir in the pasta and toss well to coat with the sauce.*

Italian wedding soup



Italian Wedding Soup

We used 12 ounces of the meatball mixture from Page 13 and a #100 scoop to make the tiny meatballs for this classic soup.

Makes 12 Cups
Total Time: 45 Minutes

Sweat in 2 T. Olive Oil:
- 1 cup yellow onion, diced
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 1 cup carrot, diced
- 1 cup ham, diced
- 1 T. garlic, minced

Add and Simmer:
- 6 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 t. dried oregano
- 2 t. crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 bay leaf

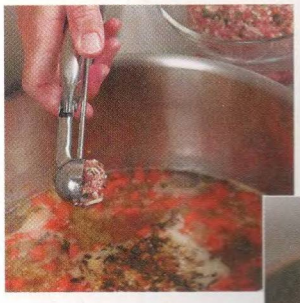
Drop in:
- 30 uncooked marble-sized meatballs, *Page 13*

Stir in:
- 1 can (15 oz.) white beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups whole spinach leaves
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley

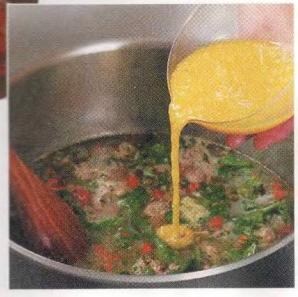
Combine; Off Heat, Add:
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 cup Parmesan, grated

Sweat vegetables, ham, and garlic in oil in a stockpot over medium heat until softened. **Add** chicken broth and seasonings; simmer 15–20 minutes. **Drop** meatballs into simmering soup with a small scoop or a melon baller. Cook until they float to the top, 3–4 minutes. **Stir in** beans, spinach, and parsley. Cook just until spinach wilts, about 2 minutes. **Combine** eggs and Parmesan with a whisk. Off heat, stir egg mixture into soup.

This is one of the richest soups you'll ever make in 45 minutes using canned broth. The fresh vegetables totally take away any prepackaged taste you might get from canned broth. The meatballs add depth because you're actually cooking them in the broth. And finally, the soup reaches "full-bodied" status by swirling in a Parmesan-egg mixture just before serving.



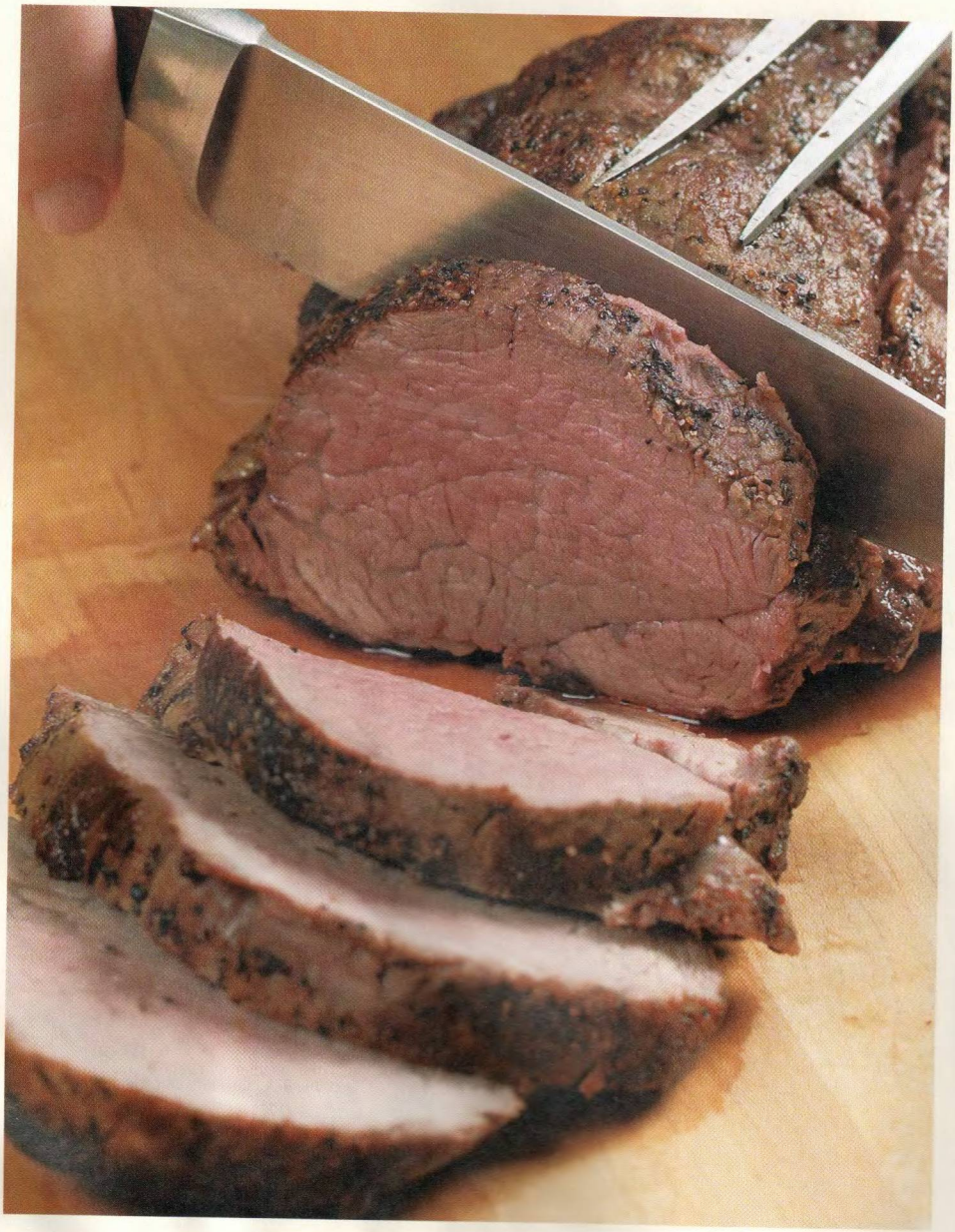
◄ *Use a small scoop or a melon baller, to drop the raw meatballs into the soup.*



Whisk together the eggs and Parmesan. Off heat, stir mixture into the soup. ►

pan roasted beef tenderloin

Pan roasting is a great technique for thick cuts of meat and fish. It keeps in all the natural flavor and moisture that lean cuts can't afford to lose.



Beef tenderloin is kind of a food chameleon. It's subject to quick and frequent change depending on its environment.

On one hand, it is the most expensive cut of beef, reserved most of the time for special occasions. And yet for all its high stature, beef tenderloin actually plays a fairly unassuming role on the taste charts. So what makes this cut of beef so popular?

First of all, it is, without a doubt, the most tender cut of beef. That's because this muscle rarely gets a workout except to occasionally move the steer's head. The more a muscle works, the more flavor it tends to have.

And second, that tenderness doesn't come from fat. A four-ounce cut only has about 260 calories. But that's the catch—fat usually spells flavor. So tenderloin typically tastes best served with something to make up for its lack of powerful beef taste.

That's why you can serve tenderloin with the recipe for Stroganoff Sauce and blue cheese on Page 19. While this cheese is strong-tasting, it's a perfect complement to the mild beef.

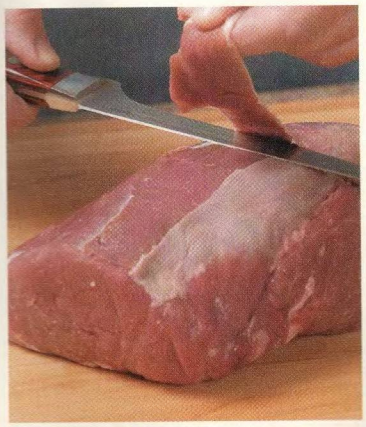
Pay special attention to the searing and roasting steps. By browning the meat's proteins and sugars, you are enhancing the meat's flavor even more.

Searing questions

Cooking tender meat like this tenderloin requires four steps: trimming, trussing, searing, and roasting. Here's what to do.

Trimming

Tenderloin is surrounded by a thin membrane called silverskin. It lies right next to the meat and has to be removed because it shrinks when heated (rather than melts). If it's not trimmed away as in Step 1, it will cause the tenderloin to curl up into the shape of a quarter moon.



1 Trim the tenderloin of fat and silverskin to prevent curling.

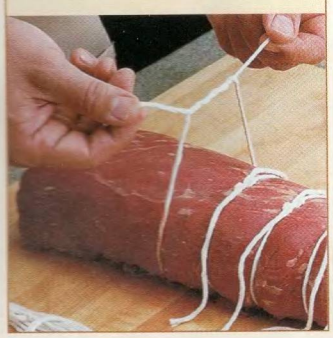
Trussing

Once tenderloin is trimmed, it no longer has any structure (unlike other cuts that are surrounded with fat). You can see this if you look at Step 1 again—the tenderloin starts to flatten out.

You want the meat as round as possible for even cooking and also for a good presentation. Trussing is the key. It's easiest to use individual strings to tie the meat firmly—but not too tight!

Shaping the meat

Use individual pieces of cotton string to truss meat—this helps keep its round shape and insures even cooking. Do not tie too tightly or the string could cut into the meat.



Searing

Once the meat is trussed, rub it with oil, salt, and pepper, then sear it in a hot skillet. As the proteins heat up, they coagulate, releasing a kind of sugar water. And as the water evaporates, the sugar caramelizes (browns), both on the meat and in the pan. This not only looks good on the roast, but also adds plenty of flavor.

Roasting

Tenderloin, like other lean cuts of meat, are best *roasted* at high heat rather than *baked* at lower temperatures. Flavor comes from the browning, not from fat slowly melting into the meat. Roast until the internal temperature hits 130° (medium-rare).

Pan Roasted Beef Tenderloin

Searing then roasting at high heat keeps flavor in tenderloin. Truss it so that the roast cooks evenly and maintains its shape.

Makes One 3-lb. Roast
Total Time: 1 Hour

Trim and Truss:

1 3-lb. cut of beef tenderloin

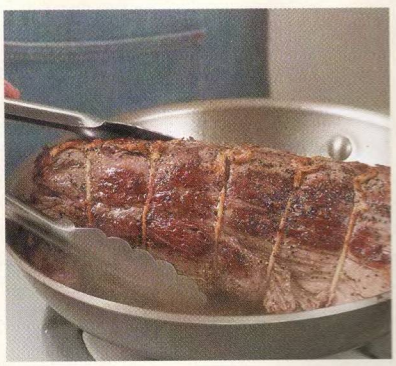
Rub Tenderloin with:

1/4 cup olive oil
1 T. kosher salt
1 T. coarse ground black pepper

Sear, then Roast.

Preheat oven to 450°.
Trim silverskin and fat from tenderloin; wash it and dry well with paper towels. Truss the meat with cotton string at every inch to create a round profile. Heat a large ovenproof skillet over high heat.
Rub meat with olive oil. Then salt and pepper just *before* searing to prevent juices from leeching. This promotes maximum browning.
Sear on all sides until browned, about three rotations, 1 min. each.
Roast in oven 20–30 minutes, turning tenderloin over halfway through cooking for even browning. When temperature reads 130° (medium-rare), remove from oven. Cover the roast with aluminum foil and let rest 10 minutes before cutting into 1 1/2" slices.

2 Sear the meat on top of the stove to start the caramelization process.

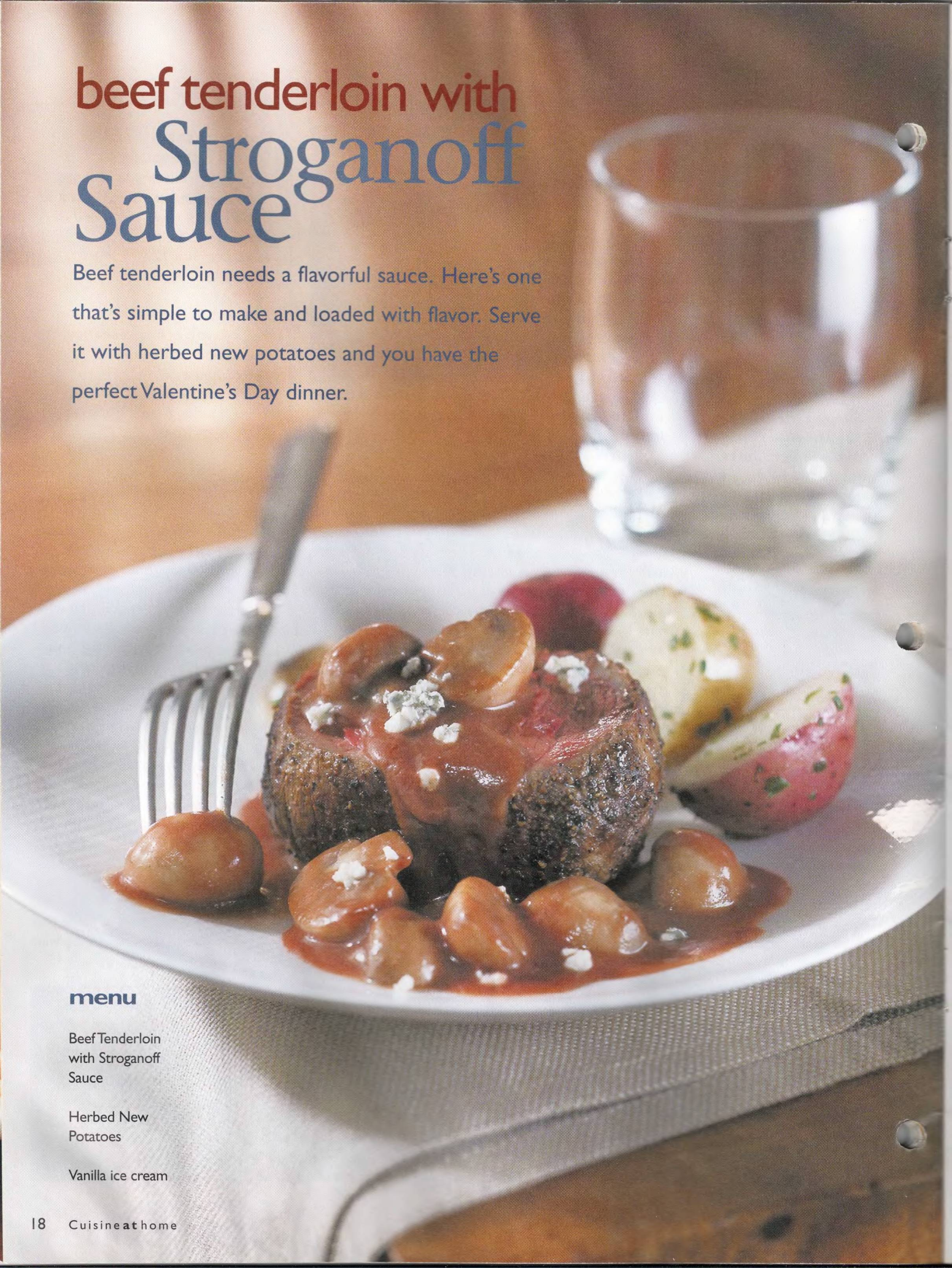


3 Roast meat in oven until internal temperature is 130°. Tent and rest 10 minutes.

4 Look at browning in the pan. You can deglaze with 1/4 cup wine and add to sauce on Page 19.

beef tenderloin with Stroganoff Sauce

Beef tenderloin needs a flavorful sauce. Here's one that's simple to make and loaded with flavor. Serve it with herbed new potatoes and you have the perfect Valentine's Day dinner.



menu

Beef Tenderloin with Stroganoff Sauce

Herbed New Potatoes

Vanilla ice cream

http://kuharka.ru/

Two sauces in one

I'm going to be real honest with you. I had a bit of a dilemma with this stroganoff sauce. It had great flavor and actually wasn't that hard to make. But when I added the sour cream at the end, the beautiful mahogany color of the brown sauce was lost. It tasted great but the good looks were missing—and that's important to us food people.

You make the choice

So here's what you can do. First, make the wine stock, then the brown sauce. The sauce is great just by itself and you can even make it a day ahead.

Then, if you want more of a "stroganoff" sauce, add 1/3 cup sour cream before serving. (Don't boil the sauce or the sour cream will break.) You'll end up with a tan sauce that tastes fantastic but doesn't look great with red meat.

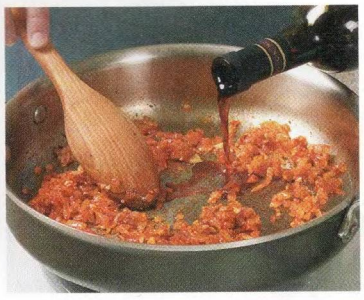
If you don't want to alter the color with sour cream, consider putting the brown sauce over the meat first, then sprinkle some Stilton or blue cheese over the sauce. Strong cheeses like these hold their own against the flavors of the beef and brown sauce. But don't use too much. They are powerful, especially when warmed a little from the sauce.

Just be sure to sprinkle the cheese on the sauce—don't stir. That would discolor it. You want separate little bits of cheese melting in it rather than blending in like the sour cream does.

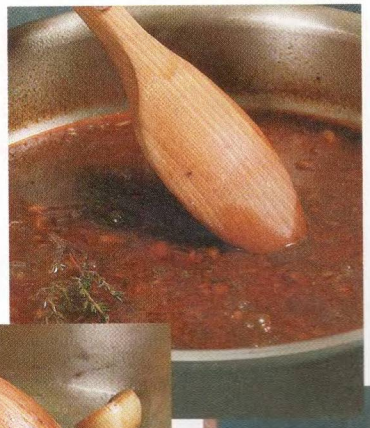
Accompaniments

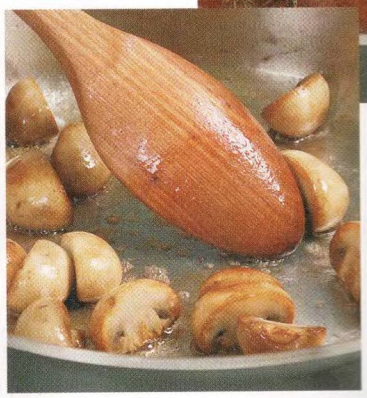
Take a look on Page 36—there are several good potato recipes that would be ideal with this dish. Try the herbed potatoes or Hasselbacks. They're simple and won't clash with all the flavors.

1 This is deglazing—loosening the brown bits of food with liquid.

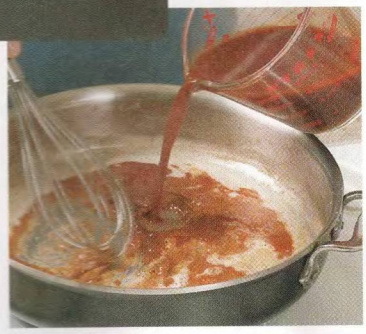


2 This is reducing—evaporating part of the liquid. See the edge?





3 Saute mushrooms in batches so they brown instead of steam.



4 Cook roux until light brown. Add stock and simmer to thicken.

Red Wine Stock

A good brown sauce starts with a rich stock. The key is to gently brown everything you put into the sauce, including the onions and tomato paste.

Makes 1½ Cups

Saute in 2 T. Vegetable Oil and 1 T. Unsalted Butter:

1½ cups yellow onion, chopped (about 1 large)

Add:

1 T. tomato paste

2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped

Deglaze with:

1 cup dry red wine

Add and Reduce; Strain:

1 can (14 oz.) low-sodium beef broth

Sprig of fresh thyme

Saute onion in oil and butter until lightly brown.

Add tomato paste, cooking until it turns dark. Add garlic and cook for 30 seconds.

Deglaze with red wine, scraping up all the brown bits on the bottom of the pan.

Add broth and thyme; simmer until liquid reduces by half, about 10 minutes. Strain stock before using.

Stroganoff Sauce

Makes 1½ Cups

Saute in 2 T. Unsalted Butter and 1 T. Vegetable Oil; Remove:

8 oz. white mushrooms, cleaned and halved

Make a Roux from:

2 T. unsalted butter

2 T. all-purpose flour

Add:

1½ cups Red Wine Stock, *above*

1 T. Dijon mustard

Sauteed mushrooms

Option #1: 1/3 cup sour cream

Option #2: blue cheese

Heat butter and oil in a saute pan over medium-high heat.

Saute mushrooms until barely done and still somewhat white in color. Remove from pan; set aside.

Make a roux in the same pan by melting the butter then whisking in the flour. Cook over low heat until roux browns slightly.

Add wine stock, mustard, and mushrooms. Simmer until sauce thickens. Stir in sour cream or crumbled blue cheese. Spoon sauce over sliced tenderloin.

cuisineclass

perfect cutlets

Fast, easy, and good-tasting. Cutlets show their versatility using different meats in an infinite array of recipes.

While most cutlet recipes are pretty simple, the key to success begins with the cutlet itself. It can't be too thin or too thick, nor can it be cut just any way. For the best cutlets, they have to be cut correctly and then pounded to the right thickness.

If the cutlet is too thin, the meat can dry out by the time the outside is browned to a presentable finish. On the other hand, if the meat is too thick, the exterior could overbrown (even burn) by the time the meat finishes cooking.

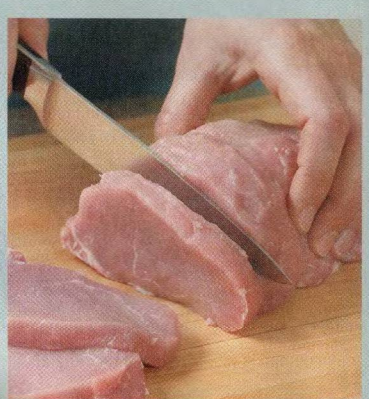
Besides the right thickness, most cutlets should be cut *against* the grain. Short muscle fibers are more tender and less likely to constrict and buckle when cooked over high heat.

Slicing: Slice your own cutlets since you don't know the cut or quality of pre-packaged ones.

Pork: Use loin. Trim it well and slice across the grain. Each slice should be about 1/2" thick before pounding.

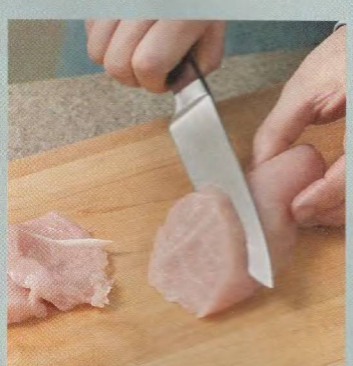
Chicken: While some cooks cut breasts in layers for cutlets, this is almost impossible to do to a consistent thickness. Cut in half and pound gently.

Turkey: I use tenderloin that I've sliced on the bias for nice large cutlets. Again, keep them in that 1/2"-thick range.



Pork: Slice loin across the grain about 1/2" thick before pounding.

Chicken: Use the breast and remove tenderloin. Cut in half.



Turkey: Slice the turkey tenderloin on the bias. When cut this way, these 1/2" slices tend not to fray when cut and flattened.

The Perfect Cutlet

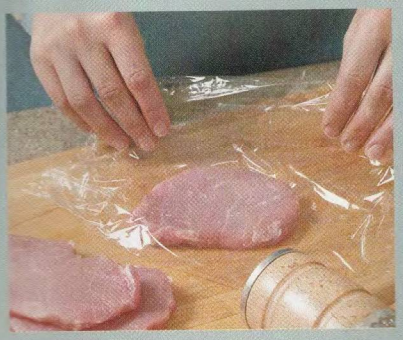
Many cutlet recipes direct you to simply slice the meat to the desired thickness—pounding is not necessary. Perhaps that may be true, but I still like to use a mallet to pound the cutlets to an even 1/4" thickness.

First, not all of us can always cut an even slice. It may be thicker at the top and taper off at the bottom. That unevenness is especially noticeable on a chicken breast that tapers naturally.

Pounding can take care of the unevenness on most meats. And while these cuts of meat are naturally tender, flattening breaks down some of the tougher connective tissues to make the cutlet even more tender.

Covering

Before flattening the cutlets, cover them with plastic for better shaping and cleanup.

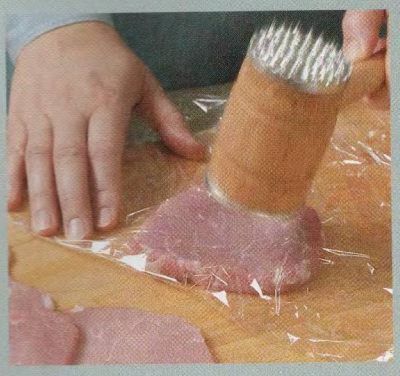


To help hold shape and prevent splattering, cover meat with plastic wrap.

Plastic wrap: Use a plastic wrap that is as thick as possible to prevent tearing. Regular wrap is okay but can tear after two or three cutlets. Freezer wrap is much better since it's thicker, stronger, and can hold up longer.

Shaping: This may be a slight stretch but think of a pair of stockings. Although they are sheer, stockings hold a leg's shape by displacing pressure evenly. The same thing happens with the plastic wrap. As the mallet hits the meat, the pressure is slightly displaced and less traumatic, preserving the cutlet's smooth appearance.

Gently pound pieces with glancing blows until cutlet is 1/4" inch thick.



Pounding

There is an art to pounding out a cutlet—it's not just waling away at a piece of meat. The secret is gentle, glancing taps.

After covering, gently pound the meat with the flat side of your mallet (there's no point in using the waffled tenderizing end). Strike the meat with glancing movements until the cutlet is about 1/4" thick. This motion will preserve the meat's smooth appearance and when cooked, the 1/4"-thick cutlet will be golden brown on the outside and remain moist on the inside.

MALLETS

There are all types of mallets. Some have handles which provide leverage, others are palm held for good control. And some are flat and heavy, up to eight pounds. No mallet? Try a sturdy bottle wrapped in plastic.

Chicken Piccata

If you like fresh lemon, tender chicken, and a quick recipe, then this classic Italian dish will fit perfectly on your dinner plate.

Because cutlets are lean and only cook for a few minutes, they produce no natural drippings to create a foundation for a sauce. So any sauce you serve with cutlets will be made with ingredients other than pan drippings. But that's not all bad. A splash of white wine and a blast of lemon make a quick, sassy sauce that packs plenty of flavor to accompany these cutlets.

Coating: There are plenty of ways to coat cutlets. Like escallops (a very thin type of cutlet), they can be lightly dusted with flour, or even simply seasoned before being sauteed. But my favorite is to use Japanese panko bread crumbs as shown with pork cutlets on Page 24. They make a crisp crust that browns perfectly.

No matter what method you prefer, the final cutlet should be slightly golden for looks and taste. If I'm not coating cutlets with panko, I always prefer to dust them lightly with flour. Just a little bit acts like an emulsifier (binder) which makes the sauce look and feel richer by thickening it slightly.

Chicken Piccata

This piccata is so rich that one breast half can serve two people. Turkey tenderloin also makes a great substitute.

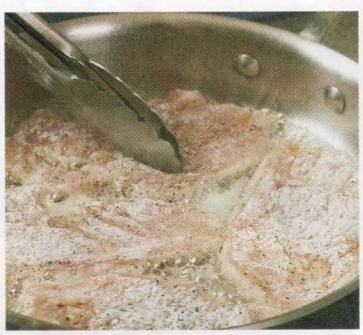
Makes 2 Servings

Season:
4 chicken cutlets, *Pages 20–21*
Saute in:
2 T. vegetable oil
Deglaze with:
1/4 cup dry white wine
1 t. garlic, minced
Add:
1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
2 T. fresh lemon juice
1 T. capers, drained
Sauteed cutlets
Finish with:
2 T. unsalted butter
Fresh lemon slices
Garnish with:
Chopped fresh parsley

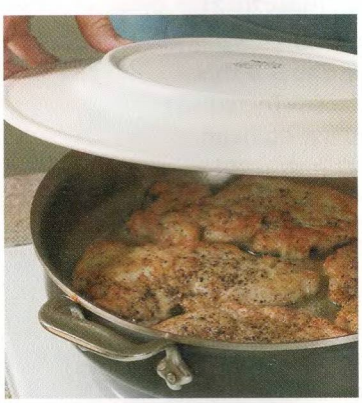
Season cutlets with salt and pepper then dust with flour, see *Figure 1*. Spray a saute pan with nonstick spray, add vegetable oil, and heat over medium-high. **Saute** cutlets 2–3 minutes on one side, see *Figure 2*. Flip the cutlets over and saute the other side 1–2 minutes with the pan covered, see *Figure 3*. Transfer cutlets to a warm plate; pour off fat from the pan. **Deglaze** pan with wine and add minced garlic. Cook until garlic is *slightly* brown and liquid is nearly gone, about 2 minutes. **Add** broth, lemon juice, and capers. Return cutlets to pan and cook on each side 1 minute. Transfer cutlets to a warm plate. **Finish with** butter and lemon slices, see *Figure 4*. Once butter melts, pour sauce over cutlets. **Garnish** with chopped fresh parsley and serve.

1 Prepare the chicken for cutlets. Season the cutlets with salt and pepper; dust with flour, shaking off the excess.

2 Saute cutlets over medium-high heat. Be careful of splattering.

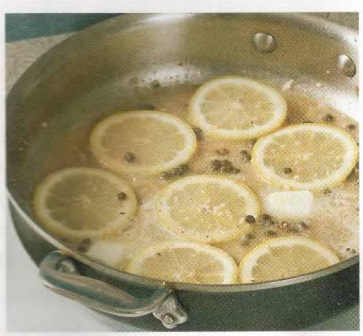


3 Flip cutlets over when golden brown on first side. Cover pan with a heatproof plate and cook 1–2 min.



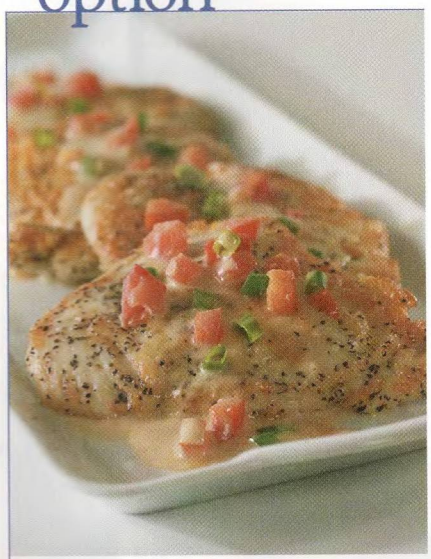
◄*A Tip*

Use a serving platter to cover the pan. This not only puts moisture into the cutlets, but it also warms the platter. Keep covered only about 1–2 minutes.



4 Finish sauce with butter and lemon, then pour over cutlets.

option



Chicken Pomodoro

A gorgeous presentation and a delightful fresh flavor. Be sure to deglaze with the vodka off heat.

Makes 2 Servings

Season:
4 chicken cutlets, *Pages 20–21*
Saute in:
2 T. vegetable oil
Deglaze with:
1/4 cup vodka
Add:
1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
2 T. fresh lemon juice
Sauteed cutlets
Finish with:
1/2 cup tomatoes, chopped
2 T. heavy cream
Garnish with:
1/3 cup scallions, minced

Season cutlets with salt and pepper then dust with flour. **Saute** cutlets in oil. Transfer to a platter; pour off fat from pan. **Deglaze** pan with vodka (AWAY FROM FLAME) and cook until vodka is nearly gone. **Add** broth and lemon juice. Return cutlets to pan and cook each side 1 minute. Transfer cutlets to a warm plate. **Finish** the sauce with tomatoes and cream. Heat through, then pour over the cutlets. **Garnish with** scallions.

Pork Cutlet
Japanese style

Japanese cuisine is not all raw fish and rice. Once you taste this pork cutlet, you'll use just about any excuse in the book to make it again—and again.

Let's face it. Japanese food conjures up all kinds of scary thoughts for anyone not familiar with the cuisine. Just *thinking* about raw fish can send a lot of people running to the nearest Golden Arches.

But this is one dish that shouldn't intimidate you. It's simply a "chicken fried" pork cutlet served with steamed rice and a lightly sweet onion broth. Nothing scary about that! The dish is called katsudon [KAHT-soo-dohn] and is one of several in the "donburi" family, which literally means "rice bowls." In fact, donburi is Japanese fast food, and once you taste katsudon, you may never care to set foot in a burger-slinging establishment again.

Katsudon is traditionally made with pork, and pounding pork loin into cutlets puts this dish squarely into the fast food category. Prepare cutlets as on Pages 20–21, then bread them following the steps, *right*.

The trouble with ethnic dishes is that they almost always require a few ingredients that most cooks don't have on hand. And there are two here that may require a trip to an Asian market, *see sidebar, right*.

Too impractical? Make katsudon using dry sherry and regular bread crumbs instead of mirin and panko. It'll still taste great, but promise yourself to make authentic katsudon sometime just to compare—as if you need an excuse!

Steps to katsudon

Good katsudon isn't so much about having all the right ingredients as it is about organizing its preparation. Here's how to bring it all together.

First, prepare and pound the pork into cutlets and set them aside. Don't pound the meat too hard or vigorously—you're just thinning it out, not tenderizing it (pork loin is plenty tender already).

Next, cook the rice. It'll probably be done before the cutlets and sauce are, but just keep the pan covered on the back of the stove, off heat.

Now simmer the sauce components until the onions are soft. As they simmer, get the eggs, flour, and crumbs ready for breading.

Japanese ingredients

Panko are bread crumbs with a light, coarse texture that's perfect for breading katsudon (or oven-fried chicken). Mirin [MIHR-in] is a sweet cooking wine made from rice and sugar. Both ingredients give katsudon its authentic, unique flavor.

First dredge cutlets in flour, then follow with egg and panko. "Double bread" them by dipping in the egg and panko once more. This extra coating will really get the cutlets crisp and golden brown.

To fry, heat the oil until it starts to shimmer, but not smoke. It must be at the right temperature (365°) before you start frying. If it's too cool, the cutlets will be greasy and cook slowly. If it's hotter than that, the breading will burn before the meat is cooked. Fry in batches so the cutlets don't crowd the pan and bring down the temperature.

To serve, place two fried cutlets in the simmering onion broth and cook gently for a minute. Transfer to a cutting board, slice, and arrange over some of the rice. Top with broth and garnish with scallions. Repeat with remaining cutlets.

Japanese Style Pork Cutlet

If you don't want to use pork, cutlets made with chicken breast or turkey tenderloins are a great substitute.

Makes 4 Servings; Total Time: 45 Minutes

Prepare:

- ½ lb. pork loin cutlets, see *Pages 20–21*
- 1½ cups raw medium-grain rice

Simmer:

- 2 cups yellow onion, sliced
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- ½ cup mirin
- ½ cup low-sodium soy sauce
- 2 T. sugar
- 4 slices fresh ginger

Bread Cutlets in:

- 6 eggs, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ t. kosher salt
- Heavy pinch black pepper
- 2–3 cups panko crumbs

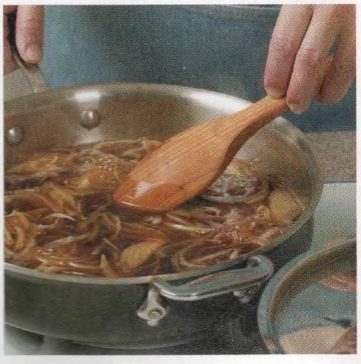
Fry in:

- ¼ cup vegetable oil

Serve Cutlets with:

- Prepared rice
- Chopped scallions

Prepare pork for cutlets. Cook rice as directed on the package and keep warm until serving.

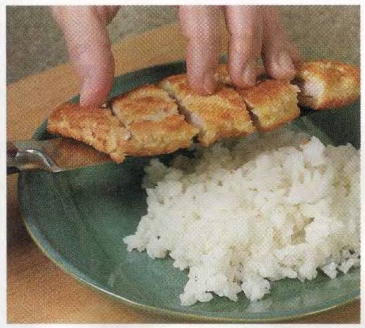


Simmer onion, broth, mirin, soy sauce, sugar, and ginger in a large saute pan over med.-low heat until onion is soft, 15 min.

Before breading the cutlets, beat the eggs in a shallow dish (like a pie plate), mix flour, salt, and pepper in a second dish, and place the panko in a third dish.

Bread cutlets by first dredging both sides in flour mixture, then dipping into the egg, and following with the panko. Then "double bread," dipping into the egg, then panko again. Transfer to a rack or plate until ready to fry. Heat oil over medium-high heat in a second saute pan.

Fry cutlets in batches, browning on both sides until cooked through, 6–8 minutes total. Transfer cutlets to a cooling rack set over paper towels to drain.

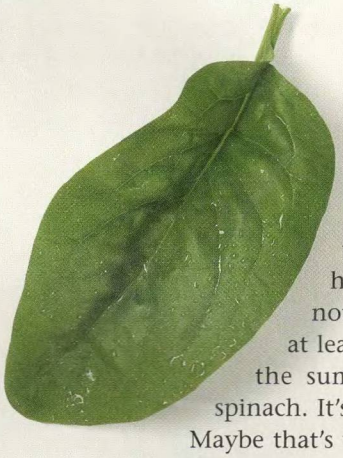


To serve, place 2 cutlets in the simmering broth; cook 1 minute to warm through. Remove and slice cutlets, place on top of some rice, ladle with broth, and sprinkle with scallions.

all about spinach

Always available and inexpensive, spinach is the one vegetable that you can count on for great flavor and even better color.

▲ To stem spinach, fold the leaf in half at the stem and pull the stem down the length of the leaf. Small leaves can be cooked as they are.



In winter, it's like the produce aisle has headed south—nothing is available, at least not like it is in the summer. Except for spinach. It's *always* available. Maybe that's why so many different cuisines use (and love) it. Italian, Chinese, French, and Indian cooks all take advantage of this reliable vegetable. And so should you.

Buying

Really, the only choice to make when buying spinach is whether to get it prewashed in bags or tied in bundles. The convenience of bags is obvious and I'm not above buying them. But the flavor (and often the quality) of spinach in bundles is sometimes better.

So what should you buy? In the case of spinach, whatever looks best. The leaves should be deep green in color with supple texture, not yellow or wilted. They may be smooth or crinkled, depending on variety, with crisp stems. And no matter what, it shouldn't be slimy (prewashed spinach in bags is prone to this).

The tricky part about buying spinach is knowing how much to get. Frequent spinach eaters know the quantity purchased will be *very* different from that same amount cooked. Generally, 16 cups of loosely packed leaves (about a pound) shrink to about *two cups* sauteed—be prepared if you're cooking for a crowd.

Storing

The shelf life of spinach is short so it must be stored properly to stay fresh as long as possible. Spinach in bags should have little or no moisture inside—that's what turns it slimy. Pick through the leaves, removing any bad ones. Store good leaves loosely in resealable plastic bags in the crisper of the refrigerator for up to three days.

Store spinach by the bundle in the vegetable crisper also, loosely wrapped in a plastic bag. Don't wash it until you're ready to cook—prolonged contact with water also makes the leaves soft.

Cleaning

Spinach in bags is typically dirt-free but bundles of spinach *must* be washed—they're sandy. Wash it in several changes of water. The leaves are clean when there's no sand at the bottom of the sink. It's a pain but this is the only way to know the leaves are clean.

Dry the leaves in a salad spinner or with paper towels, then remove the thick stems, *see photo above*. Stems cook slower than the leaves and can be hard to eat.

Cooking

Spinach is inherently tender and doesn't need much time to cook. One great method is to blanch it in boiling water for literally a second or two, then drain it. This helps eliminate the astringency common to spinach. Then, after pressing out the moisture, the spinach is sauteed just until heated through (see Page 28).

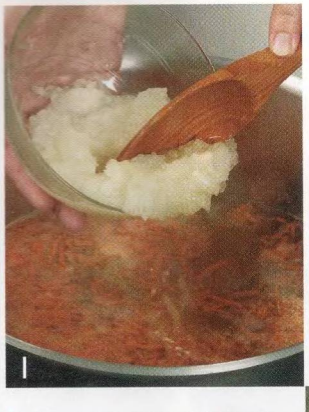
spinach soup

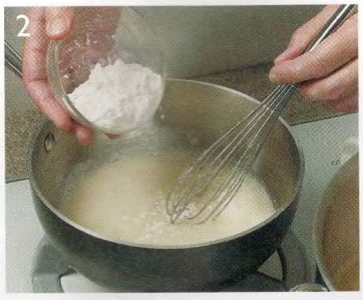
Spinach tends to get lost in most soups, but not this one. Eight cups of spinach and a touch of lemon ensure its presence in this rich treat.

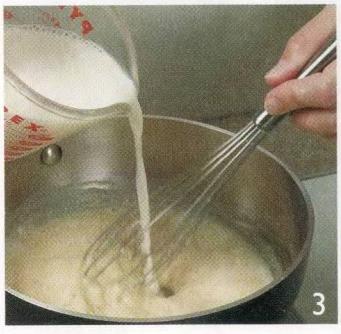
Makes 8 Cups
Total Time: 25 Minutes

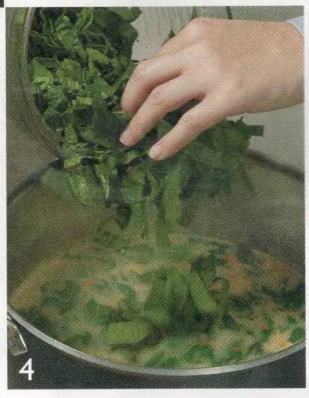
For the Soup Base—
Simmer:
4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
1/2 cup yellow onion, grated
1/2 cup carrot, grated
1 t. kosher salt, or to taste
1/2 t. freshly ground pepper
1/4 t. freshly grated nutmeg
For the White Sauce—
Melt 6 T. Unsalted Butter;
Whisk In:
6 T. all-purpose flour
Whisk In:
1 cup milk (whole or 2%)
Stir into the Soup Base:
Prepared white sauce
8 cups spinach, stemmed, thinly sliced into ribbons
Off Heat, Add:
2 cups heavy cream
1 T. lemon zest, minced
For the Garnish—
Toast in 2 Teaspoons Unsalted Butter:
1/2 cup sliced almonds

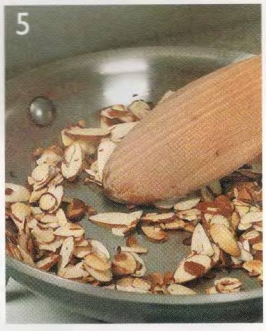
1. For the soup base, simmer broth, onion, carrot, and seasonings in stockpot for 15 minutes.
2. For the white sauce, melt butter in saucepan over low heat; whisk in flour until smooth.
3. Whisk milk into butter mixture, stirring to prevent lumps. Cook 2 minutes to eliminate floury taste. Stir into simmering soup base.
4. Add the spinach to the soup and cook just to wilt, 1 minute. Off heat, add cream and zest.
5. For the garnish, melt butter in a small saute pan over low heat. Add almonds and toast until they begin to brown, about 5 minutes, stirring often. Sprinkle 1 T. almonds over 1-cup servings of soup.

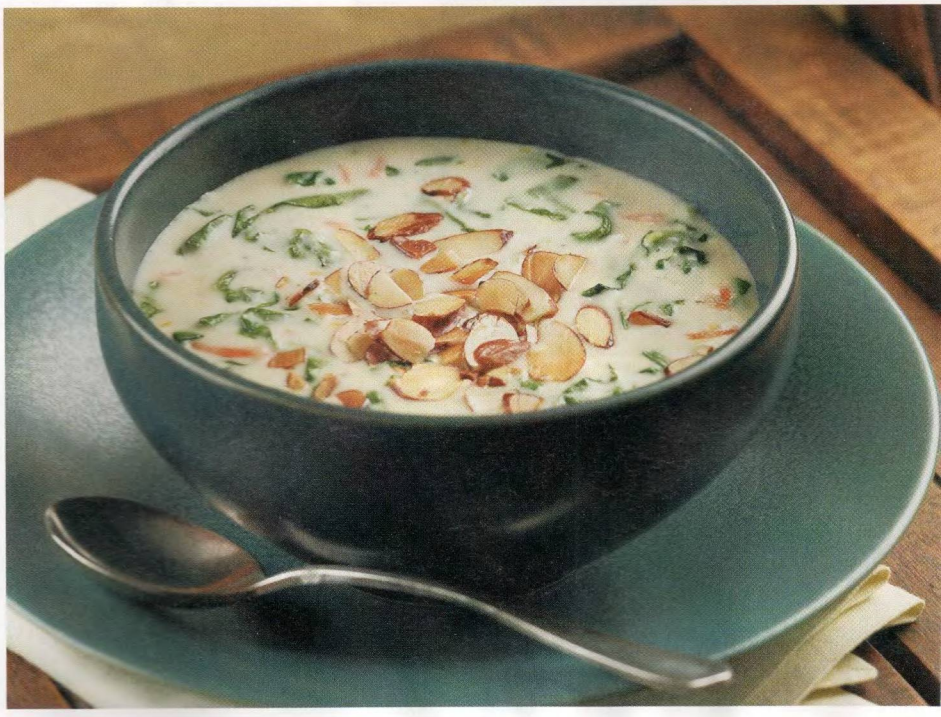












sauteed spinach

Blanching spinach before sauteing may seem like overkill. But it emphasizes the flavor and texture of this everyday vegetable.

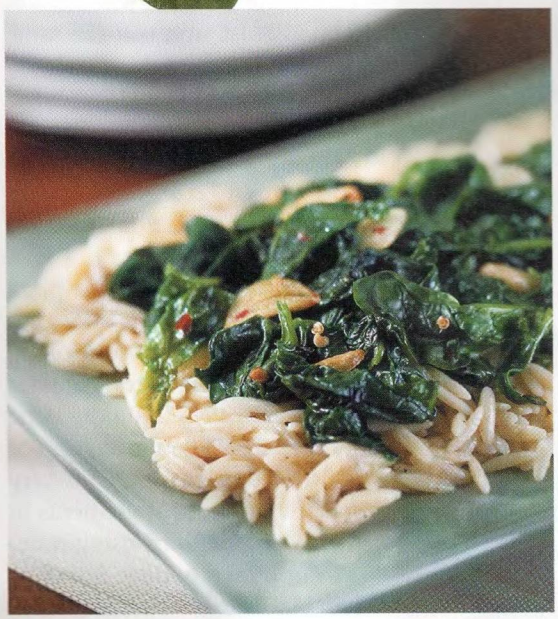
Makes 2 Cups
Total Time: 15 Minutes

Wilt; Press Dry:
1 lb. spinach, stemmed (about 16 loosely packed cups)
Saute in 2 T. Olive Oil:
3–4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1/4 t. crushed red pepper flakes
Add and Saute:
Wilted spinach
Salt and pepper to taste
Before Serving, Drizzle with:
Balsamic vinegar

Bring a large pot of water to boil over high heat.
1. Wilt spinach in boiling water. Add it all at once, stir, and drain immediately in a colander—*do not* let spinach sit in the water. Press as much liquid from it as possible, forming it into a disk.
2. To saute, heat oil in a large saute pan over med.-high heat. Add garlic and pepper flakes; saute until garlic turns golden, about 1 minute. Stir constantly.
3. Add the disk of spinach and break it up with a wooden spoon, stirring to coat with oil and garlic. Cook just until heated through, about 1 min. Season with salt and pepper, then transfer spinach to a serving platter.
4. Drizzle spinach with balsamic vinegar before serving.

Adding on

With a few additional steps and ingredients, simple spinach recipes are transformed into something bigger *and* better.



Stop with the spinach recipes on Pages 27 and 28 and you'll be doing fine. But these two variations give them a new look.

The sauteed spinach becomes a casual, comforting meal when it's paired with Parmesan-rich pasta. This grown up version of mac and cheese might even get kids to eat their spinach!

And simply adding potatoes and shrimp to the soup turns a light, flavorful first course into something more substantial.

Creamy Orzo with Sauteed Spinach

Makes About 5 Cups
Total Time: 30 Minutes

Cook According to Package Directions:
1 cup dry orzo pasta (or other small shape), drained but not rinsed

Combine; Stir into Hot Pasta:
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
1 egg, beaten
2 T. heavy cream
Salt and pepper to taste

Prepare; Top Pasta with:
Sauteed Spinach, *Page 28*

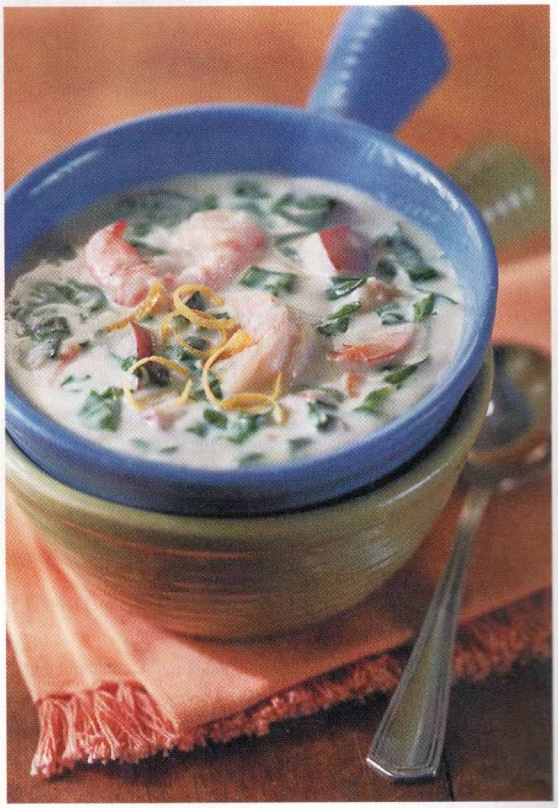
Garnish with (Optional):
Parmesan cheese, grated

Cook pasta according to package directions; drain but do not rinse.

Combine Parmesan, egg, heavy cream, salt, and pepper in a small mixing bowl while pasta cooks. Stir egg mixture into drained, hot pasta. Cover to keep warm and set aside.

Prepare sauteed spinach as on Page 28, *omitting the balsamic vinegar in the final step.* Transfer pasta to a platter or divide among serving bowls. Top with the sauteed spinach.

Garnish each portion with Parmesan cheese, if desired, and serve immediately.



Shrimp and Spinach Chowder

Makes 8 Cups
Total Time: 30 Minutes

Prepare:
Spinach Soup, *Page 27*

Add to Soup Base:
3 cups red potatoes, cut in chunks (about 1 lb.)

Stir in with Spinach:
1/2 lb. medium shrimp, peeled and deveined (about 16)
Tabasco and salt to taste

Garnish with:
Lemon zest curls

Prepare the Spinach Soup on Page 27, *with these changes:*

Add the potatoes to the soup base with the onion and carrot.

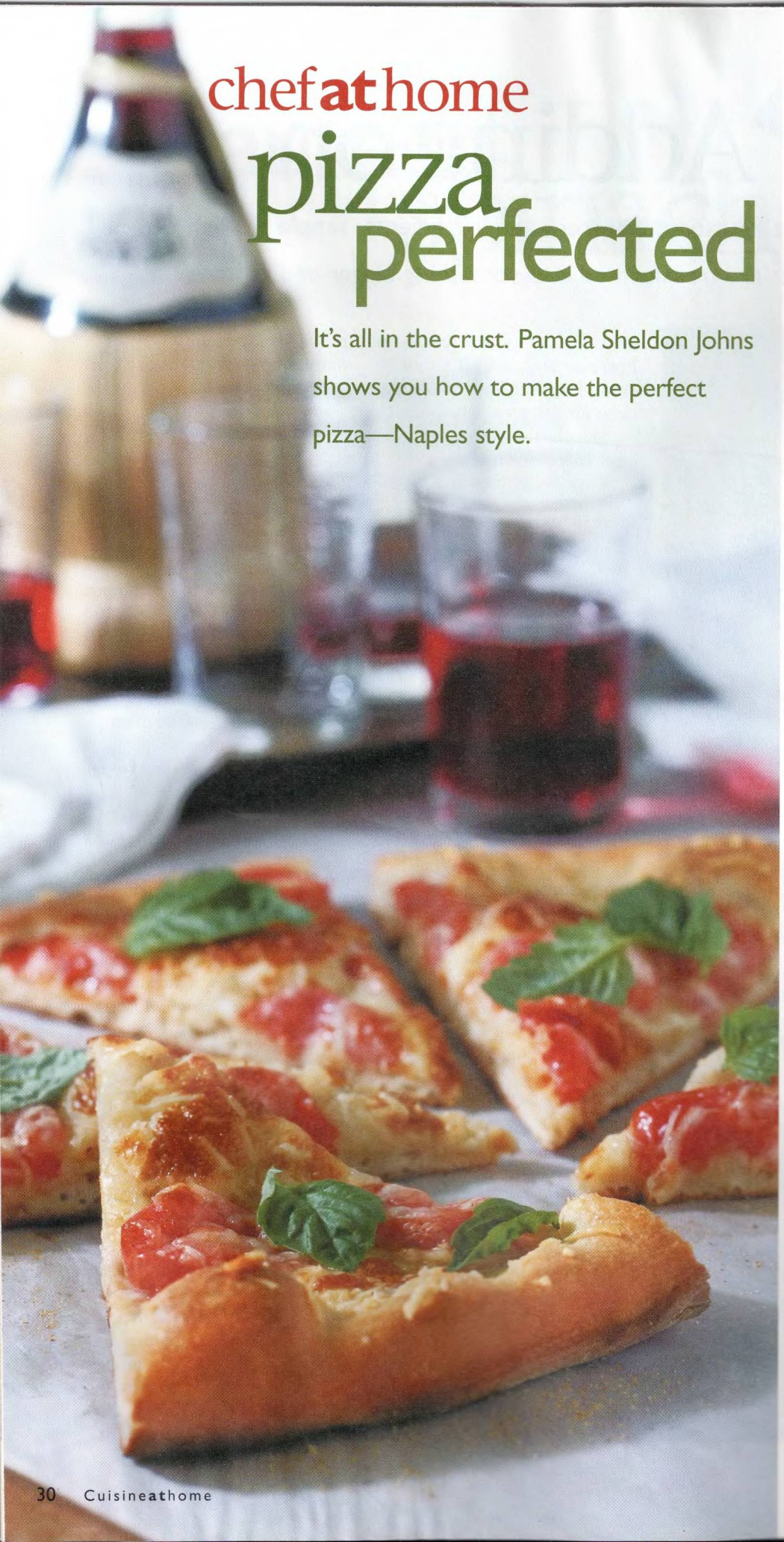
Stir in the shrimp with the spinach. Allow the shrimp to cook through, about 3 minutes. Finish with the cream as in recipe on Page 27; omit the lemon zest and toasted almonds. Season the chowder to taste with Tabasco and salt.

Garnish with lemon zest curls.

chef**at**home

pizza perfected

It's all in the crust. Pamela Sheldon Johns shows you how to make the perfect pizza—Naples style.



There's no denying it—the crust makes the pizza. So what makes a good crust, and is it the same as a real Italian pizza crust?

I turned to Pamela Sheldon Johns for the answers. Pamela not only lives in Tuscany but has also written *Pizza Napoletana*, a terrific, in-depth cookbook on authentic Italian pizza.

Pamela explained that pizza is taken so seriously in Naples that the same type of controlling board which regulates wine has been established to do the same for pizza. This denomination of controlled origin (DOC) is very specific about the ingredients in pizza dough and its rising time.

The dough is made from just four ingredients: soft flour, water, salt, and yeast. It's kneaded for 30 minutes then left to rise for four hours. After this first rise, it's shaped into smaller balls and allowed to rise another two to four hours. The dough should not be disturbed until it's ready to be shaped into a pizza. Only then can it be stretched by hand—never by a machine.

About Pamela Sheldon Johns

Pamela lives full-time in Tuscany writing cookbooks and managing Poggio Etrusco, her olive oil-producing farm and agriturismo. Some of her many books include Pizza Napoletana, Gelato, *and* Pasta! *which are published by Ten Speed Press.*

See ***www.FoodArtisans.com*** *for more information about her cookbooks, culinary workshops in Italy, and week-long apartment rentals at Poggio Etrusco.*

Making the dough

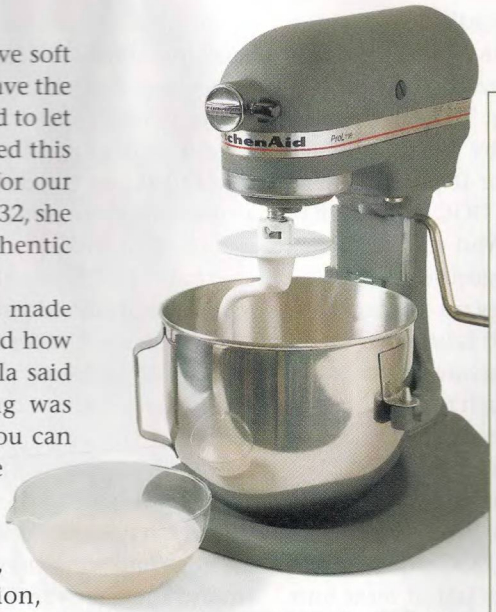
Now most of us don't have soft Italian flour, nor do we have the six to eight hours required to let it rise. So Pamela suggested this quicker, crustier dough for our American tastes. (On Page 32, she shares her recipe for authentic Neapolitan pizza dough.)

Flour: When we first made the classic pizza, I noticed how soft the crust was. Pamela said the flour we were using was soft "00" Italian flour. You can approximate it using three parts all-purpose flour to one part cake flour.

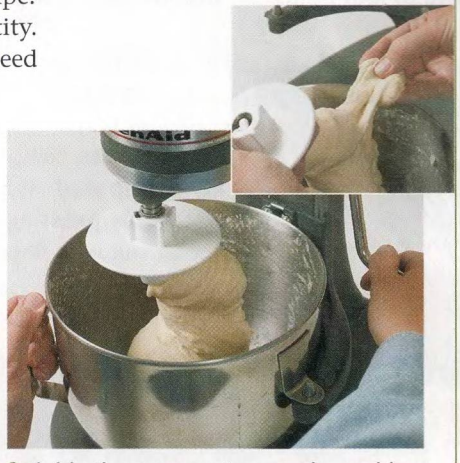
She did concede that, for a popular modification, you can use a high-protein bread or semolina flour in place of cake flour for a crisper crust. That's what we're doing in this recipe.

Yeast: Yeast is a living entity. To make sure it is alive, you need to "proof" or *prove* it's active. While Pamela rarely uses sugar (it is not allowed according to DOC rules), she did add it here. By feeding sugar to the yeast, activation is accelerated, requiring less time to rise.

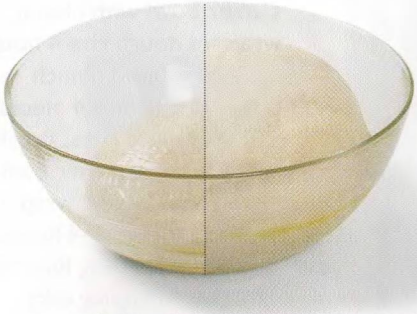
She warns, however, that by forgoing the slower rise, the dough tends to lose some of the rich, deep flavor that develops slowly over time.



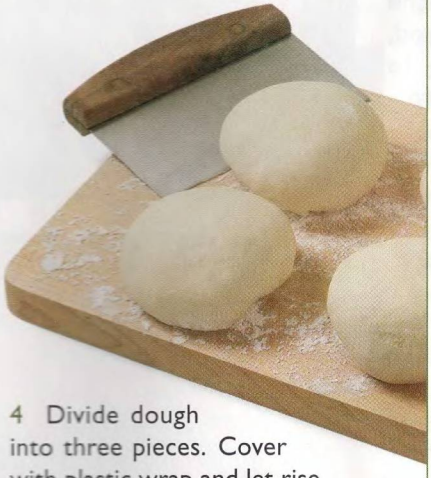
1 Combine warm water with yeast and sugar; stir and proof.



2 Add oil to yeast mixture, then add to flour mixture. Knead for 10 minutes.



3 Let dough rise until doubled in bulk, about one hour.



4 Divide dough into three pieces. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise.

Basic Pizza Dough

You can knead this dough by hand but I suggest using a stand mixer instead.

Makes Three 10–14" Pizzas
Total Time: 2 Hours

Combine:
1 1/2 cups warm water (105–115°)
2 T. sugar
2 1/4 t. active dry yeast (one 1/4-oz. packet)

Mix:
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup bread flour
1 T. kosher or sea salt

Add to Yeast Mixture:
3 T. extra-virgin olive oil

Pour Yeast/Oil Mixture into Flour and Knead.

Combine water, sugar, and yeast. Proof until foamy, about 5 minutes, *see Fig. 1*.
Mix flours and salt in bowl of heavy-duty stand mixer fitted with dough hook.
Add oil to yeast mixture.
Pour yeast mixture into flour mixture and knead on low speed for 10 minutes (or the same amount of time if kneading by hand). Dough will be elastic and slightly sticky, *see inset, Fig. 2*.

Place dough in a lightly oiled bowl, turning to coat. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled, 1 hour, *see Fig. 3*.

Punch dough down and divide into three pieces; shape into balls and place on a floured work surface, *see Fig. 4*. Lightly brush dough with oil, cover completely with plastic wrap and let rise another 45 min. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 550° with stone on lowest rack.

Working the dough

Equipment

Both a pizza peel and stone will help deliver great results. The peel ferries the pizza to and from the oven, and a porous stone creates a crispy crust. The stone should be preheated for at least 30 minutes on the lowest oven rack.

Plenty of kneading and a long rise deliver the type of crust that Neapolitan pizza is known for.

Kneading: You could knead this dough by hand, but use a stand mixer if possible. Not only does the DOC allow it, they suggest it. "And so do I!" says Pamela. That's because authentic Neapolitan pizza dough (see recipe at right) is kneaded for 30 minutes. Make sure your mixer is powerful enough to complete the task without overheating.

Rising: There's no doubt about it—pizza dough derives its flavor and texture from a long, slow rise. The DOC stipulates the first rise last at least four hours. Then the dough is divided into softball-sized portions and allowed to rise another two to four hours.

Pamela acknowledges that this kind of time is hard to find. So her basic dough recipe increases the yeast to shorten the rise time, includes sugar and oil, and is kneaded just 10 minutes. She assures that these concessions do not sacrifice flavor.

Shaping: The dough should remain undisturbed until you're ready to shape it. With that said, take a ball of dough and using your fingers, pat it out from the center to the edge, *see Fig. 5*. Leave the edge a bit thick so it puffs when baked.

Stretch it further, lifting it by the edge and working your way around the circle, *see Fig. 6*. For thinner, crisp crust, use a rolling pin to flatten the dough into a larger circle, *see Fig. 7*. Once shaped, assemble your pizza.

5 Place risen ball of dough on a lightly floured work surface. Flatten by pressing it from the center out with fingertips.

6 Grab the dough near the edge and rotate the round, allowing dough to stretch as you turn.

7 For thick crust, press and stretch to a 10–12" round. For thinner crust, roll stretched dough to 14" round. Transfer dough to a dusted peel.

Authentic Neapolitan Pizza Dough

Pamela thought it would be a good idea to give "pizza purists" the true Neapolitan dough as governed by the UNI (the governmental agency that regulates arts, goods, and services in Italy).

Neapolitan Dough

This dough takes 6–8 hours but it's the real deal.

Makes Four 8" Pizzas

Combine:

- 1 1/2 cups warm water (105–115°)
- 1 t. active dry yeast (half of a 1/4-oz. package)

Mix with:

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup cake flour
- 1 T. sea salt

Add Yeast Mixture; Knead. Cover and Let Rise. Shape into Pizza Crusts.

Combine water and yeast. Proof until foamy, 5–8 min. **Mix** flours and salt in bowl of a heavy-duty stand mixer fitted with dough hook. **Add** yeast mixture to flour and knead at low speed 30 minutes. Shape dough into a round, place in a lightly oiled bowl, and turn to coat. **Cover** bowl with plastic wrap; let dough rise 4 hours in a warm place. Punch down, divide into 4 pieces, and shape into balls. Brush lightly with oil, cover completely with plastic wrap, and let rise another 2–4 hours. **Shape** by pressing fingertips into dough, leaving edge puffy to create a rim. Grasp rim with hands, working your way around the circle. As dough dangles, it stretches while edge stays plump.

margherita pizza

With three ingredients, this is probably the simplest (*and best*) pizza you'll ever build!

The story of Margherita pizza is a colorful one. In 1889, Queen Margherita visited Naples. In her honor, a bread maker dressed up his flatbread to reveal the Italian colors—red tomatoes, white mozzarella, and green basil. Suffice it to say, it was a big hit and the rest is history.

Now, governmental guidelines (DOC) require that true Margherita pizza use these same three ingredients (but *only* buffalo mozzarella). It also mandates rising times for dough and wood-burning ovens for baking.

While this recipe wouldn't pass Italian regulations, it comes pretty close and still tastes great. This version uses fresh or low-moisture mozzarella instead of buffalo. And a pizza stone in your oven is a good substitute for a wood-burning oven.

The first choice for tomatoes are fresh Romas. But Italian cooks agree that canned tomatoes are an acceptable substitute when fresh tomatoes aren't in season.

▲ *Spread tomatoes over pizza dough and top with slices of mozzarella.*

▲ *Before baking, drizzle extra-virgin olive oil over the pizza.*

MARGHERITA PIZZA

Tomatoes, mozzarella, and basil make authentic Margherita pizza.

MAKES ONE 10–14" PIZZA
TOTAL TIME: 15 MINUTES

SHAPE:
1 portion of Basic Pizza Dough, *Page 31*

ASSEMBLE PIZZA WITH:
3/4 cup Roma tomatoes, coarsely chopped or sliced 1/4" thick*
3–4 oz. mozzarella, thinly sliced
Sea or kosher salt to taste
Extra-virgin olive oil

BAKE; BRUSH WITH:
Extra-virgin olive oil

FINISH WITH:
8 fresh basil leaves, whole or chiffonade (thin strips)

**You may also use 3/4 cup drained canned, diced tomatoes.*

Preheat oven and stone to 550°.
Shape dough, pressing and stretching it into a 10–12" round (or rolling with a rolling pin into a thinner 12–14" round). Lift dough onto peel that's been dusted with cornmeal or flour.
Assemble pizza with tomatoes, leaving a 1" margin around the edge; top tomatoes with cheese and sprinkle with salt. Drizzle olive oil in a spiral motion from the center of the pizza to the outer edge.
Bake assembled pizza on preheated stone 5–8 minutes, or until the edges and cheese are golden brown. Slide peel under pizza to remove. Brush crust edges with oil.
Finish with fresh basil, slide pizza onto a cutting board, slice, and serve.

pizza toppings

These *Cuisine Custom Toppings* can make even ready-made crusts score a perfect 10.

BBQ Chicken Pizza

Store-bought rotisserie chicken and BBQ sauce make this easy.
Makes One 12" Pizza

Toss Together:
2 cups cooked chicken, diced
1/2 cup purchased BBQ sauce
Shape Dough; Brush with:
Extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher or sea salt to taste
Assemble Pizza with:
1 cup fontina cheese, grated
Prepared BBQ chicken
1/2 cup tomatoes, chopped
1/2 cup red onion, thinly sliced
Bake; Brush Crust with:
Extra-virgin olive oil
Garnish with:
1/4 cup coarsely chopped cilantro

Toss chicken with BBQ sauce.
Shape pizza dough; brush with oil and sprinkle with salt.
Assemble pizza, topping it first with cheese then following with the chicken, tomatoes, and onion.
Bake as on Page 33. Brush crust edges with olive oil.
Garnish pizza with cilantro and serve immediately.

Potato-Sausage Pizza

The Swiss cheese and potato combination make this pizza unique.
Makes One 12" Pizza

Shape Dough; Brush with:
Extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher or sea salt to taste
Assemble Pizza with:
1 cup Swiss cheese, grated
1 cup fresh spinach leaves
2 cups red potatoes, unpeeled, sliced, cooked
2 cups cooked Italian link sausage, cut into 1/2"-thick rounds
Bake; Brush Crust with:
Extra-virgin olive oil
Sprinkle with:
Crushed red pepper flakes

Shape pizza dough; brush with oil and sprinkle with salt.
Assemble pizza, topping it first with cheese then following with a layer of spinach, cooked potato slices, and sausage.
Bake as on Page 33. Brush crust edges with olive oil.
Sprinkle with red pepper flakes and serve immediately.

Mesclun Pizza

Pizza and salad in one! A bottled vinaigrette on the salad is fine too.
Makes One 12" Pizza

For the Vinaigrette—
Combine:
2 T. balsamic vinegar
2 T. extra-virgin olive oil
1 t. garlic, minced
1/2 t. sugar
Salt to taste

For the Pizza—
Shape Dough; Brush with:
Extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher or sea salt to taste
Assemble Pizza with:
1/2 cup mozzarella or provolone cheese, grated
1/4 cup Parmesan, grated
3 Roma tomatoes, thinly sliced
Bake; Brush Crust with:
Extra-virgin olive oil
Toss with Vinaigrette; Top Pizza with:
3–4 cups mesclun (baby salad greens)
Sprinkle with:
1/4 cup goat cheese, crumbled

Combine vinaigrette ingredients and set aside.
Shape pizza dough; brush with oil and sprinkle with salt.
Assemble pizza with cheeses and tomatoes.
Bake as on Page 33. Brush crust edges with olive oil.
Toss vinaigrette with greens then arrange on top of pizza.
Sprinkle crumbled goat cheese over the greens and serve.

Pizza with Chicken and Roasted Red Pepper Cream Sauce

Move over tomato sauce—this rich red pepper sauce is a nice change of pace. You may want to continue the Southwestern theme with black beans, sour cream, or lime-grilled shrimp.
Makes One 12" Pizza

For the Red Pepper Sauce—
Reduce:
2 cups heavy cream
Roast and Puree:
1 red bell pepper
Blend with:
Reduced cream
Salt to taste

For the Pizza—
Shape Dough; Brush with:
Extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher or sea salt
Assemble Pizza with:
Red pepper sauce
1 cup white cheddar, grated
1 cup frozen corn kernels, thawed
2 cups cooked chicken, diced
4 jalapeños, seeded, sliced into rings
Bake; Brush Crust with:
Extra-virgin olive oil
Garnish with:
1/4 cup scallions, minced

Reduce cream by half in small saucepan over med.-high heat, 10 minutes.
Roast bell pepper; cool, peel, seed, and chop. Place pepper in blender and puree until smooth.
Blend pepper puree with cream and salt to taste.
Shape dough; brush with oil and sprinkle with salt.
Assemble pizza, topping it with some pepper sauce then following with cheese, corn, chicken, and jalapeños.
Bake as on Page 33. Brush crust edges with oil.
Garnish with scallions.

faster **with** fewer

potato sides

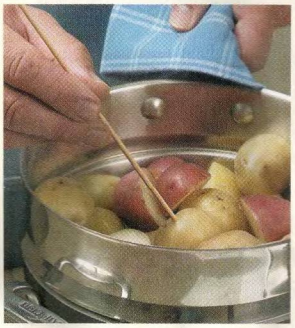
You can't argue with simplicity and these four potato side dishes prove it. Great flavor with a minimum of ingredients and cooking—it doesn't get much better.

Herbed New Potatoes

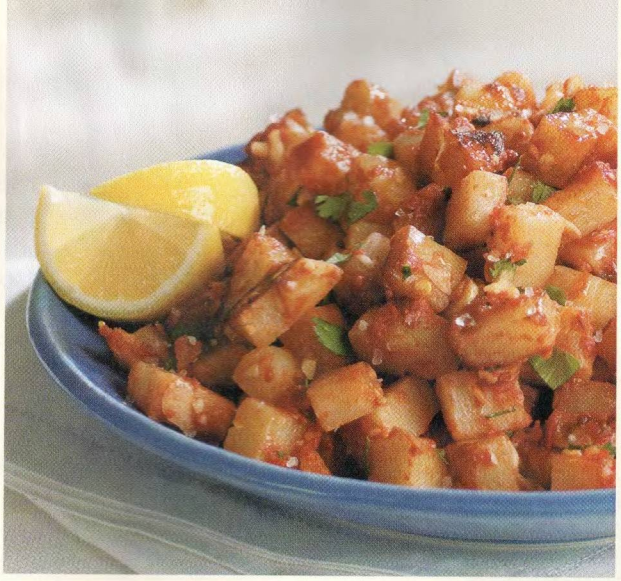
Feel free to vary the fresh herbs in this dish. Thyme, rosemary, and tarragon are also good.
(Makes About 3 Cups; Total Time: 20 Minutes)

These potatoes are a great side dish for the beef tenderloin on Page 16.

Steam:
2 lbs. assorted red and white new potatoes, halved (16 potatoes)
Toss Potatoes in:
2 T. unsalted butter, melted
2 T. finely chopped parsley
2 T. finely chopped chives
Salt to taste



Steam halved potatoes, covered, over boiling water until fully cooked, about 15 minutes. Test potatoes for doneness using a skewer to avoid splitting them.
Toss potatoes with melted butter, herbs, and salt until coated. Serve hot.

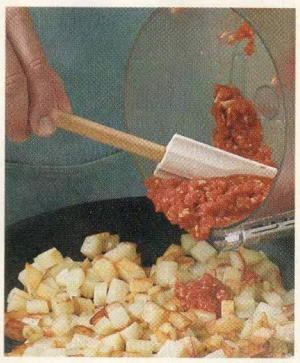


"Bravo" Potatoes

This traditional Spanish tapas dish has flavor written all over it. The coarse sea salt at the end adds texture.
(Makes About 3 Cups; Total Time: 30 Minutes)

Fry in 2 T. Olive Oil:
1 1/2 lbs. russet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1/2" cubes (about 4 cups)
Pulse; Add to Potatoes:
1 can (14 oz.) diced tomatoes, drained
4–5 cloves garlic, sliced
1/2 t. ground cumin
1/2 t. sugar
1/2 t. crushed red pepper flakes
10 dashes Tabasco
Salt to taste
Garnish with:
Drizzle of lemon juice
Chopped fresh cilantro
Coarse sea salt

Serve Bravo Potatoes with fried or scrambled eggs for brunch or a light supper.



In a large nonstick skillet, heat olive oil over medium-high heat until it shimmers.
Fry cubed potatoes in a single layer until browned and partially cooked through, about 10 minutes. Turn once or twice with a spatula, but don't stir too often—they'll brown better if left alone.
Pulse tomatoes, garlic, and seasonings in food processor just to break up tomatoes (do not puree). After potatoes have browned, add tomato mixture and stir to coat.

Reduce heat to medium and cook 5–8 minutes, or until potatoes are cooked through; stir often to prevent scorching. Transfer potatoes to a platter.
Garnish with drizzle of lemon juice, chopped cilantro, and coarse sea salt. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Hasselback Potatoes

These Scandinavian-style potatoes make a simple yet elegant side dish. Plus, they're fun to make!
(Makes 8 Halves; Total Time: 45 Minutes)

The next time you make steak, serve Hasselbacks in place of the usual baked potatoes.

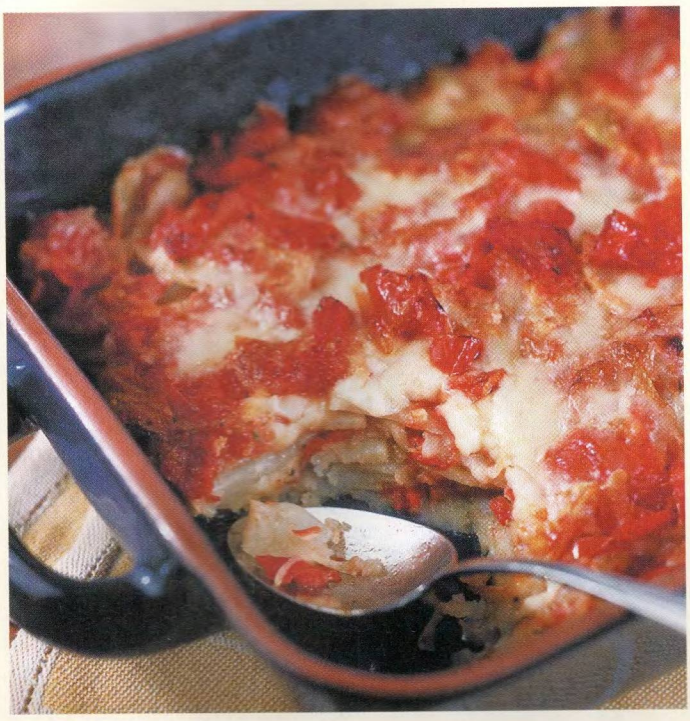
Prepare:
4 medium Yukon gold potatoes, peeled, halved lengthwise, fanned

Process:
1/2 cup white bread crumbs
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
1 T. olive oil or melted butter
1 t. sweet paprika
Salt to taste

Drizzle Potatoes with:
2–3 T. olive oil

Preheat oven to 450°; oil a large glass baking dish.
Prepare peeled, halved potatoes, placing each half, cut side down, on a cutting board. Arrange two chopsticks on both sides of potato and thinly slice across. (The chopsticks keep you from cutting through the potato.)

Process crumbs, cheese, oil, and seasonings in food processor; transfer to a shallow dish.
Drizzle potatoes with oil, carefully bend to separate sections, then roll tops in crumb mixture. Arrange potatoes in baking dish, cover with foil, and bake 30 min. Remove foil and continue baking until crumbs are brown and potatoes cooked, 15 more minutes.



Potato-Tomato Gratin

This is just what you need for cold winter nights when the wind is howling—comfort food at its best.
(Makes One 9 x 13" Gratin; Total Time: 55 Minutes)

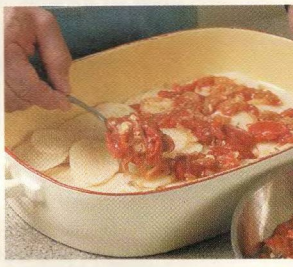
Saute in 2 T. Olive Oil:
1 yellow onion, thinly sliced

Stir in:
2 T. garlic, minced

Add and Cook:
10 Roma tomatoes, seeded, cut into chunks (1 1/2 lbs.)
2 t. minced fresh rosemary

Layer:
4 russet potatoes, sliced 1/8" thick
Salt and pepper to taste
Tomato mixture
1 cup Swiss cheese, grated

This is a nice side dish with roast chicken. But it's also great by itself, served with a green salad.



Preheat oven to 450°; spray a large casserole dish with nonstick spray.
Saute onions in a skillet over medium-high heat with olive oil just until soft.
Stir in garlic; cook another minute, just until aromatic.
Add the tomatoes and rosemary. Continue to cook until all moisture is evaporated, about 10 minutes.
Layer half the sliced potatoes in prepared casserole; season with salt and pepper. Now top potatoes with half of the tomato mixture and half the cheese. Repeat layering, ending with cheese. Cover gratin with foil and bake 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake 15 more minutes to brown cheese. Let stand 5 minutes to set the cheese before slicing and serving.

lemon TART

This dessert has everything going for it—true lemon flavor, great textures, and a fresh look. And did I mention that it's easy?

With the lack of seasonal fruits at hand for dessert making this time of year, it's important to have a lemon tart recipe in your repertoire. And let me tell you, this is the one you want to have.

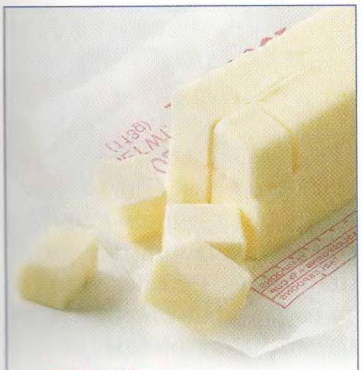
What makes this tart special? Balance. Nothing about it tips too far one way or the other. Take the filling—it's the first place the balance can get out of whack. It's either too sweet, too eggy, too firm ... you get the idea. But not here. Now, I'll admit that I prefer a tangy lemon filling in a tart, and this is definitely tangy (it's a *lemon* tart, after all). For a more subdued filling, make it with half orange juice. But don't add more sugar to straight lemon juice—that will mess up the texture.

And if the filling's texture is off, you won't notice the crisp almond crust underneath. It's great against that smooth filling and you don't want to miss it.

So with the filling and crust in harmony, this tart is darn near perfect. But some whipped cream won't throw things off *too* much!

Making the crust

The high proportion of fat to flour makes this crust "short"—tender, crumbly, and forgiving to mix and roll. For best results, keep these things in mind.



Cubing butter
Small cubes of butter incorporate into the dough quickly and with the least amount of melting. First cut the stick of butter in half lengthwise, then cut those two halves lengthwise in half. Now slice across the sticks for cubes.

Mixing

A food processor mixes this dough quickly. Add the butter all at once and pulse just until it's the size of peas. If mixed too much, the dough will become oily and hard to roll.

How much water to add is a bit of a judgment call. The air and flour humidity can fluctuate, making it tricky to give you *exact* water quantities. The dough should hold together when pinched, but not be sticky. Start with the minimum amount of ice water, then gradually increase it as needed.

Chilling

It's critical to chill the dough, both after mixing and before prebaking. It'll roll out more easily, and won't be as apt to sink down the sides of the pan when baked.

Rolling

As you roll, lightly flour the work surface to prevent sticking. Flip and turn the dough a lot in the early stages of rolling to keep sticky spots from forming. And don't worry if the edges crack a little. Just pinch them together.

Roll the dough into a 14" circle, fold it into quarters, transfer to a tart pan, then unfold. Lift the edges of the dough, tucking it into the pan where the bottom meets the sides (try not to stretch the dough or it may shrink excessively when baked). Trim excess dough by rolling the rolling pin on top of the pan, then gently press the dough against the sides of the pan. Freeze until firm.

Prebaking

Prebake the dough in the lower third of the oven until golden on the edges and bottom. The crust can be either hot or cool when the lemon filling is added.

Lemon Tart with Almond Crust

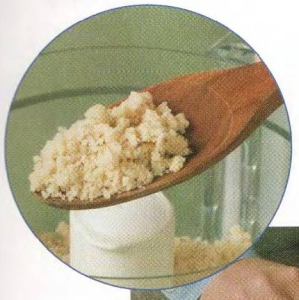
Makes One 9" Tart
Total Time: 1 Hour + Chilling

For the Almond Crust—
Process:
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/3 cup sliced almonds
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 t. kosher salt
Pulse in:
6 T. unsalted butter, cold, cubed, *see box, left*
1/2 t. almond extract
Add; Pulse to Blend:
3–5 T. ice water

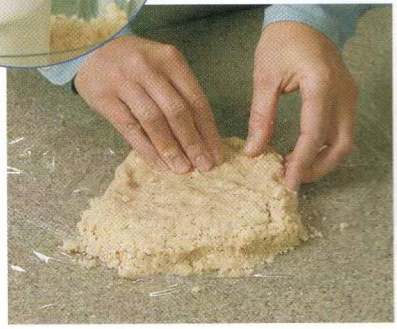
For the Lemon Tart Filling—
See Page 40

Process first four ingredients in processor fitted with steel blade until they resemble coarse sand. **Pulse in** butter and extract until butter is the size of peas. **Add** ice water; pulse to incorporate (add more water 1 T. at a time if dough seems dry). Dump dough onto a sheet of plastic wrap, form into a disk, wrap, and chill for at least 30 minutes before rolling out.

Preheat oven to 425° with rack in lower third; spray a 9" tart pan with removable bottom with nonstick spray. Roll out dough, place it in the pan, trim, then freeze. Prebake in lower third of oven 20–25 minutes, or until golden brown. Reduce heat to 325°.



◀ *Dough will look "sandy." Press it into a disk on a sheet of plastic wrap and chill.*



▲ *A bench scraper helps lift and move the rolled out dough to the pan.*

▼ *Trim overhang with rolling pin, freeze, then prebake until golden.*

▼ *The sides may slip a little during baking—it's okay.*

This filling adheres to the "less is more" philosophy. Because of that, the flavor is pure lemon and the texture is smooth as silk. Here's how to bring everything together.

Making the filling

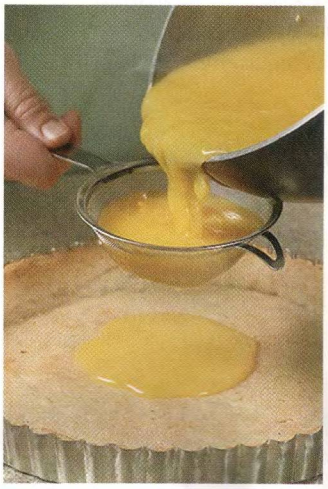
One reason for the filling's incredible smoothness has to do with how it's cooked. For the best results, keep these things in mind.

First, use a nonreactive saucepan (by that, I mean one with a stainless steel interior). Otherwise, the lemon juice will react with the material (say, aluminum) and discolor. Be sure the pan has a heavy bottom and sides as well for the best heat diffusion. That will help the eggs set gently.

▼ *Shortly into cooking, the filling will be thin and liquidy.*

Second, cook the filling just until it thickens to a consistency of loosely whipped cream. This does not take very long—about 10 minutes. As it cooks, stir constantly with a rubber spatula, scraping the sides and bottom. And don't let the filling boil or the eggs may scramble (although the sugar and acidity of the lemon juice will help limit that).

▲ *But it only takes about 10 min. for it to thicken properly.*



Maybe the most critical step when making the filling is straining it. This removes the zest and any cooked bits of egg for a silky texture.

▲ *Straining the filling ensures its texture is super-smooth.*

Baking

The tart is baked briefly to just *barely* set the filling in the crust. Test it for doneness by lightly touching the center with your fingertip—it should jiggle, and some filling may stick to your finger. If the filling is firm or "bouncy," it's overdone. Don't worry too much if this happens—the tart will taste fine, but the texture will be a bit firm.

Slicing and serving

Be sure the tart cools completely before removing it from the pan and slicing. I know you'd like to dig right in, but if you do, the filling will be too soft and the tart won't slice neatly.

As an added bonus, this can be made, chilled, then served the next day—or even frozen! I can attest to the fact that it tastes great straight from the freezer, but for the best flavor, it really should come to room temperature first. If you're garnishing it with berries, *right*, wait to do so until shortly before serving.

Lemon Tart Filling

Gently cooking the filling will help achieve the silky texture you want. Stir constantly as it cooks.
Makes About 2 Cups

Whisk:

- 3 whole eggs
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup fresh lemon juice, strained (4–5 large lemons)
- 2 T. lemon zest (3 lemons)
- Pinch salt

Add:

- 6 T. unsalted butter, cubed

Whisk eggs, yolks, sugar, lemon juice, zest, and salt together in a large saucepan.

Add the butter and cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly. Cook until filling thickens slightly but is pourable, 8–10 min. Strain filling through a fine mesh strainer into the prebaked crust.

Bake tart at 325° until filling is just set, about 10 min. Cool tart before removing the sides and transferring to a serving platter.

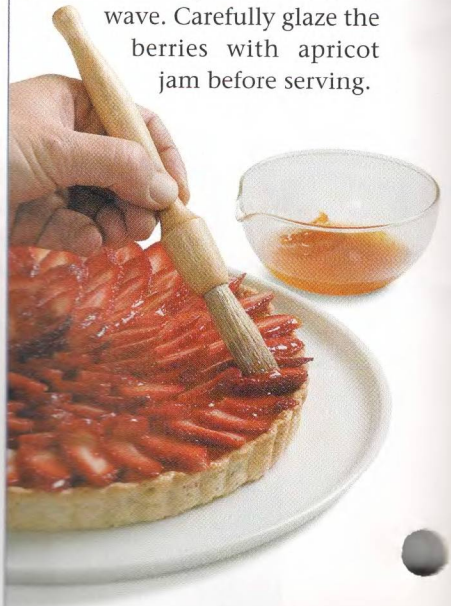
Adding on

You'll know that spring has sprung when you serve a lemon tart with strawberries. Here's how to put an elegant (but simple) "pastry shop" spin on this tart.

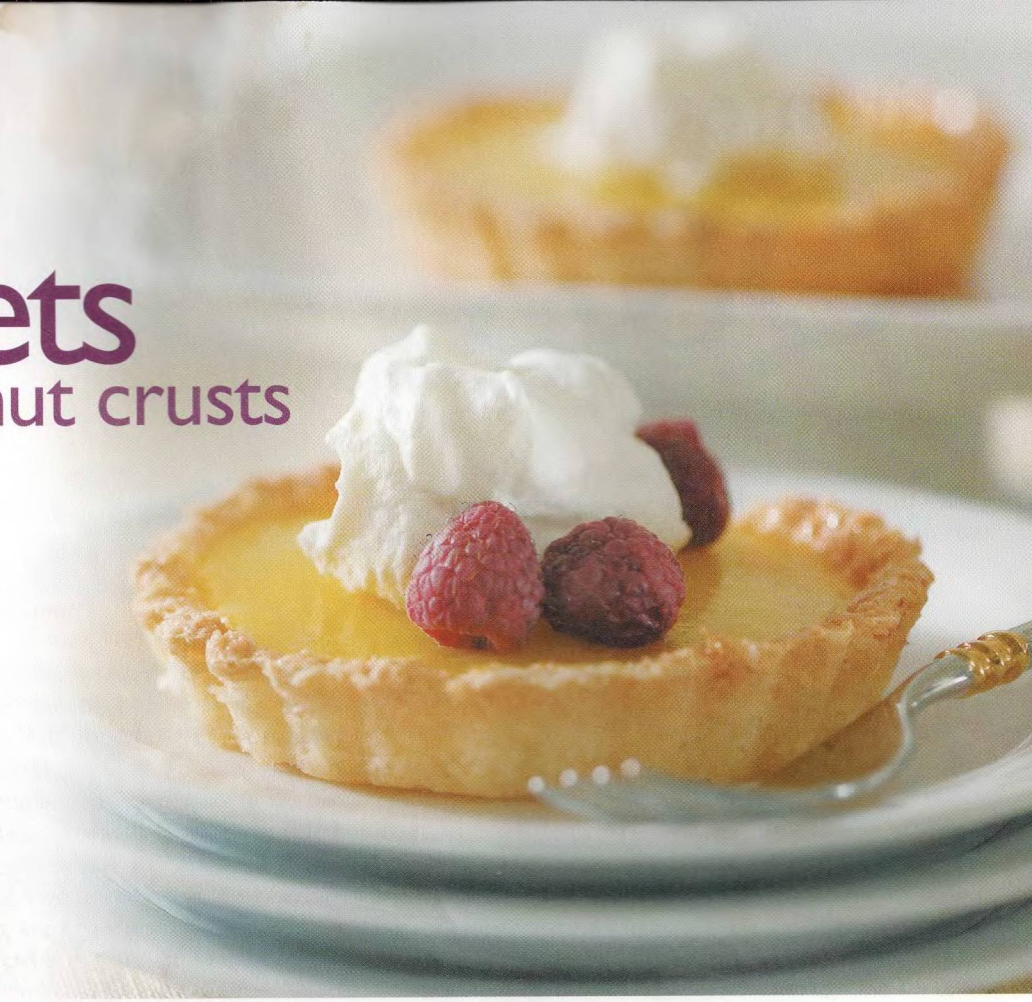
First, rinse and hull two pints of small, ripe, red strawberries. Now slice them by standing each one on its stem end, then cutting the berry from tip to stem end into four or five thin slices.

Arrange the slices around the baked, cooled tart, starting at the outside edge and spiraling to the center. As you go around, overlap the slices slightly, using any small pieces to fill in any gaps.

Finally, mix 3 T. apricot jam with 1 T. water and warm the mixture briefly in the microwave. Carefully glaze the berries with apricot jam before serving.



lemon tartlets with coconut crusts



Makes 8 Tartlets
Total Time: 1 Hour

Process in Food Processor:
2 cups sweetened, shredded coconut
1/2 cup sugar
Blend in:
2 egg whites
Fill Crusts with:
1 recipe Lemon Tart Filling, *Page 40*

Process coconut and sugar until coconut is minced.
Blend in egg whites. Press mixture into well-greased 4" tartlet pans with removable bottoms. Bake at 325° for 25–30 min., or until golden. Remove from pans. Prepare tart filling as on Page 40.
Fill each crust with 1/4 cup filling, bake for 7 minutes, and cool.

Lemon and coconut—a match made in heaven. These tartlets are just the right blend of tangy and sweet.

With a few simple steps, you could be serving this charming spring dessert. Here's what to do.

Making the crusts

Use a food processor to make the crust mixture. The processor is the only thing that can properly pulverize the coconut. Plus, it makes mixing a breeze.

You'll need eight 4" tartlet pans with removable bottoms for this. Don't use *anything* else—the crusts stick and will be impossible to remove from other pans without breaking. Spray them *generously* with nonstick spray and place on a baking sheet.

Use your fingers to press the coconut mixture evenly on the bottom and sides of the pans. Moisten them with water periodically to prevent sticking.

Baking

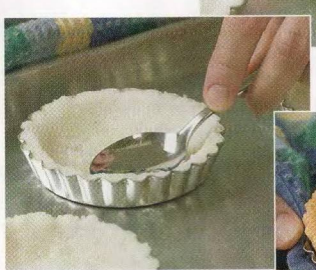
Bake the tartlets in the lower third of a 325° oven. Halfway through baking, take the tartlets out of the oven and press them with the back of a teaspoon (egg whites make them puff). Return to the oven; bake until golden.

Removing and filling

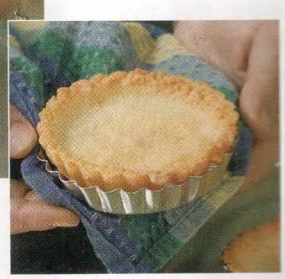
Unmold the crusts while hot, *before* adding any filling (the crusts get stickier as they cool). First, loosen the sides with a knife, then carefully push the base plate up to release the rim. Slide a spatula underneath to loosen the plate. One or two crusts may break—these are the cook's treat!

Place the crusts on a parchment-lined baking sheet, fill with lemon filling, *Page 40*, and bake briefly to set. Cool and serve.

Press 3 T. coconut mixture into each heavily greased tartlet pan. ►



▲ *Halfway through baking, press crusts down with a spoon. Return to oven and bake until golden.*



▲ *While they're hot, carefully remove crusts from pans and remove bottoms.*

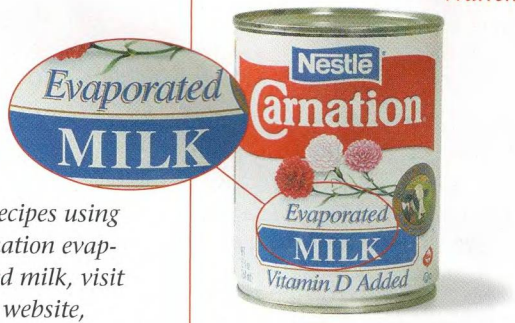
from our readers

Q&A
questions & answers

EVAPORATED MILK

What exactly is evaporated milk? And can I substitute regular milk in its place?

Susan Weintraub
Warren, MI



For recipes using Carnation evaporated milk, visit their website, ***verybestbaking.com***

Evaporated milk is unsweetened whole milk that has had 50–60% of the water removed through a heat and vacuum process. In effect, it has been concentrated so it has twice the fat and protein of an equal amount of whole milk. After canning, it's sterilized.

Because of the difference in water content, you should *not* substitute milk for evaporated. But you can reconstitute evaporated milk with an equal amount of water and use in place of milk.

OREGANO VARIETIES

How is Mexican oregano different from common oregano?

Jason Bigler
Plano, TX

The common oregano you're referring to is dried Mediterranean oregano. It's what you'll find at the grocery store labeled "oregano." Grown in southern Europe, it's a sweet, strong herb that's essential in Italian and Greek cooking.

Mexican oregano is more pungent and not sweet like the Mediterranean variety. Grown in Mexico, it's best suited to spicy, hot South American and Mexican dishes that can stand up to the stronger flavor. Don't substitute one for the other.

Order both varieties from Penzeys Spices at (800) 741-7787 or penzeys.com. Because their Mediterranean oregano is grown in Turkey, Penzeys also refers to it as Turkish oregano.

BAD SEEDS?

Should I remove the seeds from chipotle peppers in adobo sauce?

Linda Ledbetter
Huntsville, AL

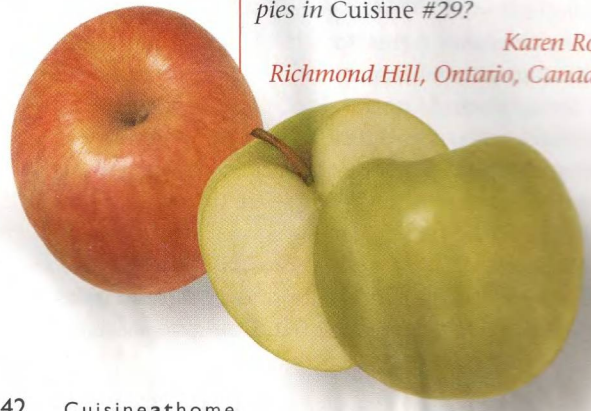
We checked with Mexican cooking authority Rick Bayless. He said that it depends on how you plan to use the peppers. For most uses, they're blended and then strained, leaving the seeds behind. You'll still get heat—it's carried by the veins, not seeds.

If using strips or chopped chipotle, it's easy to remove the seeds. Just cut the pepper open and scrape clean with a knife.

APPLE OPTIONS

What apples can I substitute for Jonagold and Braeburn to make the pies in Cuisine *#29?*

Karen Roy
Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada



The best apple pies use a combination of varieties to achieve a balance of flavor and texture. You want to mix tart, flavorful apples with ones that will hold their shape while baking.

So how do you know which varieties to choose? Here's a loose guide. Granny Smith is tart, and Ida Red and Jonagold are a nice combination of sweet and tart. Any of those tasty apples would pair well with Empire, Gala, Fuji, Braeburn, or Golden Delicious varieties. For example, Golden Delicious will hold its shape but doesn't offer much flavor, so pair it up with tart Granny Smith.

This is a great time of year to check out your local farmer's market and find varieties not usually available at the supermarket. Then taste for yourself. If an apple is mealy or bland, don't use it. Once you taste what's available, you'll never want to go back to Red Delicious for *any* reason.

PRODUCE WASHES

What are fruit and vegetable washes supposed to do? Are they more effective than plain water? And is the brand Fit *still available?*

Pat Wistrom
Carlisle, IA

There are several brands of fruit and vegetable washes available. Their purpose is to remove wax and any residual pesticides and chemicals that may linger on produce. However, *Fit* is no longer on the market.

The potential problem with rinsing with just water is twofold. First, some pesticides are water resistant. Second, any residue is often buried under a coating of wax that water alone can't permeate. For these purposes, a wash containing a natural solvent (like Veggie Wash) is more effective than water.

CRUSTY LOBSTER SHELL

Is it true that the crustiest-looking lobster, with barnacles on it, is probably the best one in the tank?

Charlotte Klise
Topeka, KS

It may sound like an old wives' tale, but Bob Bayer, Executive Director of the Lobster Institute at the University of Maine, says it's true. Lobsters molt, or shed their outgrown hard shell, then grow and fill their new shell. A dark, scratched up shell with barnacles growing on it is a sign that it's been a while (at least six months) since the lobster has shed. And this means it's likely to have a high meat yield.

SEMI- VS. BITTERSWEET

What's the difference between semisweet and bittersweet chocolate? Can they be used interchangeably?

Lorraine Thomas
Caracas, Venezuela

Both bittersweet and semisweet chocolate contain chocolate liquor (essence of the cocoa bean) and sugar. But bittersweet has more chocolate liquor, giving it a stronger, more intense chocolate flavor. Depending on availability and your own taste, they can be interchanged as needed.

Baker's brand bittersweet and semisweet chocolate ►

DRIED PLUMS OR PRUNES?

I've noticed dried plums at the market. Aren't they really prunes?

Donna Thompson
Lakeland, FL

Yes, they are one and the same. But you may find them packaged under either or both names.

In June 2000, the FDA approved renaming prunes as dried plums. The goal was to enhance consumer appeal and reach a younger target audience. The updated image is working and industry sales are up. Now that they're at the end of a two-year transition period, the name "prunes" may actually disappear from packaging.

While the fiber benefits of prunes have long been understood by consumers, this name campaign stresses added health benefits, like high antioxidants, potassium, and vitamin A.

This is one of the most frequently asked questions at Cuisine: *How do I make self-rising flour?*

Mix 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder and 1/2 teaspoon salt with one cup all-purpose flour.

Q&A

Do you have a question for *Cuisine at home*?

If you have a question about a cooking term, procedure, or technique, we'd like to hear from you. We'll consider publishing your question in one or more of our works. Just write down your question and mail it to *Cuisine at home*, Q&A Editor, 2200 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50312, or contact us through our email address shown below. Please include your name, address, and daytime phone number in case we have questions.

Email: CuisineAtHome@CuisineAtHome.com
Web address: CuisineAtHome.com

meatball subs

Meatball Sub Sandwiches

Makes 4 Sandwiches
Total Time: 20 Minutes

Prepare:
4 6" hoagie buns, hollowed
Brush with:
2 T. olive oil
Fill with; Bake:
Mozzarella cheese
Fill with:
Meatballs in Fresh Tomato Sauce, *Page 14*
Top with:
Tomato Sauce, *Page 14*
Grated Parmesan

Preheat oven to 450°.
Prepare buns by shaving a thin layer off the top of each roll. Remove some of the bready interior so you're left with a "submarine."
Brush inside of hollowed-out buns with olive oil.
Fill bottom of each bun with mozzarella and place them on a baking sheet. Bake until buns are lightly browned and cheese melts.
Fill subs with hot tomato sauce, then 2–3 meatballs.
Top subs with more sauce, then sprinkle with cheese.